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The Great Flood of '72

In the Twin Tiers

STAR-GAZETTE

Souvenir Booklet

August 1, 1972

A Tribute To Our People

The Great Flood of '72 is history now.

The raging waters that wreaked havoc throughout the Twin Tiers have receded to their natural channels.

Once more, the Chemung, the Canisteo, the Conhocton, the Cowanesque, the Tioga and the Susquehanna flow smoothly and gently toward the sea.

No one who lived through the nightmare of June 21-23 trusts them again.

Not while the scars from their devastation still lie like gashes across the land.

Not while the memory remains of wild water smashing through streets, holding houses and trees in its grip.

Not while there is mourning for the 22 who died in the swirling torrent.

Maybe not ever.

The terror of those days will not fade quickly. Nor will the spirit shown by those who performed deeds of heroism in saving lives or those who have refused to be beaten by the perverse elements.

Despite the adversity, the Twin Tiers has picked itself up by its bootstraps.

Its people have looked disaster in the face and refused to flinch.

With pluck, endurance and vitality, they have survived. And their communities live.

This book is a tribute to those people.

Cover Photos by Jerry Hendy.

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The First Day:

Incessant Rain

Wednesday, June 21, 1972

In the beginning, there was the rain.

For most Twin Tier residents, it was merely an irritant. Inconvenient and uncomfortable but hardly startling.

The sky had opened Tuesday night in the Steuben and Allegany Counties area where the Canisteo and Cohocton Rivers normally flow smoothly and quietly.

Yet the problem seemed isolated.

The words being used in Steuben County were "flash floods," a situation where the water doesn't soak into the ground but stays on the surface. A temporary condition.

That was the view in Hornell, whose 12,000 residents were the first major community along the rivers to feel the effects.

The five inches of rain had forced creeks over their banks and swollen the rivers. A state of a emergency was declared.

Yet even that flooding seemed confined.

Residents in Hornell and Canisteo to the south were being evacuated, but the Hornell mayor said there was no real danger to life if people stayed home.

Mainly, the damage was in North Hornell from Big Creek and in the city's southeastern section.

Civil Defense furnished two amphibious vehicles called ducks, and the Steuben County sheriff directed their operation.

Three persons were missing and presumed drowned.

Meanwhile, it continued to rain. And conditions worsened steadily.

Greenwood and Prattsburg were flooding, and the Prattsburg town clerk said it was the worst condition since the floods of 1935 and 1936.

Communications began to falter as telephone poles and lines fell.

Boats and canoes began replacing cars.

Rt. 15—a Steuben County lifeline—was closed, and Bath students were sent home from school.

Big Creek near Hornell went over its banks. So did Canacedea Creek at the east end of the Erie Lackwanna Railroad yards.

There were other danger signs.

A flood wall gave way in Hornell. A small street was washed away. A small bridge broke in half.

Water behind the Almond Dam rose 2½ feet above the flood stage.

Still there was no panic. No sense of impending danger downstream in Corning or Elmira or Athens or Towanda.

The flood walls there were high. A flood alert from the Binghamton Water Bureau was just that—an alert.

Life continued at its normal pace all the way down the river valley.

Even as Chemung County police agencies were warning residents to be prepared for high water, flood control officials issued soothing words.

There is no immediate threat, they said.

The river is at its lowest level, they said.

It doesn't even register at the zero mark on the 22-foot gauge in downtown Elmira, they said.

We can handle another five inches of rain, they said.

And the people went to bed Wednesday night in Corning, Elmira, Athens, Towanda and Lawrenceville with the rain drumming on their roofs. It had been just another wet, summery day.

River pours into Elmira

The Second Day:
Swollen Rivers

High water at Wellsburg

Thursday, June 22, 1972

A grim and foreboding sky greeted the Twin Tiers today.

The rain continued to beat a steady tattoo, with blinding sheets of moisture occasionally whipped by the winds of tropical storm Agnes.

There seemed to be no major problems early in the day except in western Steuben County. There conditions steadily deteriorated.

Hundreds were stranded in the Hornell and Canisteo areas, and damage mounted.

By nightfall, though, it became apparent that many areas were in trouble.

While the Almond Dam was holding fast near Hornell, conditions elsewhere were not bright.

The Conhocton River had risen 27 feet. The Canisteo River already was 7.7 feet over the flood stage at Addison.

The Tioga and Cowanesque Rivers broke through the dikes and swept the residential areas of Lawrenceville.

The Susquehanna River invaded Towanda.

Evacuation started in Elmira, Mansfield, Lawrenceville, Tioga, Blossburg, Towanda and in outlying rural sectors.

Many Steuben residents were evacuated into schools — and then isolated there by rising water.

Helicopters began flying in food and medical supplies to Hornell.

The main bridge at Addison was in danger of collapsing, and two mobile homes were swept away by the rampaging Canisteo.

Elsewhere, there was growing concern but still little conception of the horror yet to come.

Flood control officials, who had optimistically forecast a 14-foot crest early in the day, watched the Chemung River rise to 17 feet — and continue toward the top of dikes as high as 23 feet.

A state of emergency was declared in Chemung County.

Several key bridges were washed out, including the Main St. bridge in Elmira. Wellsburg, Big Flats and other low areas were under water.

The high levees along the river were still holding back the raging water, but a bubble developed under the Southside dikes. Evacuation started, while sandbagging continued, but most thought it was only a temporary inconvenience.

Corning had similar problems but not as severe. Centerway Bridge was closed, yet residents crowded the river banks to watch the racing water. The crest was predicted for early Friday morning below flood level.

An emergency was declared in Tioga County, N.Y., mainly because roads were flooded. Rt. 17 remained open, however.

Valley streets were inundated, and volunteer firemen manned pumps in several areas with persistent problems. Sandbagging began in Athens.

Communications were still available, although telephone lines were starting to clog with long-distance calls.

Governmental officials were up all night getting reports and making decisions. But many residents in places like Corning and Elmira still went to bed in their own homes complaining of the rain and hoping it would be brighter tomorrow.

In a nutshell:

The Pennsylvania situation was critical in some sections.

Western Steuben and parts of Yates were flooded. But except for low sections of Chemung County and eastern Steuben, there was still optimism that the water would stop before it hit the top of the dikes.

It turned out to be a futile hope.

Volunteer firemen rescue a Wellsburg family

The Third Day:

Evacuation

A car awash in Elmira

Friday, June 23, 1972

Today was the day the Twin Tiers felt the full shock of the wild rivers that devastated its cities and their people.

Few communities escaped unscathed.

Corning's Northside was virtually obliterated by rushing water that poured over the 23-foot dike and careened down city streets at speeds up to 35 miles an hour.

Elmira's Southside and downtown area were inundated.

The Athens business district was wiped out.

Towanda was isolated and under water.

Lawrenceville was covered by the overflow. So were places like Big Flats, Wellsburg, Chemung and Tioga in a seemingly endless list.

Thousands were evacuated — 11,000 in Bradford County alone.

Only the early decisions to evacuate kept the death toll down. Corning later counted its dead at 18—there were 22, all told but Elmira and Athens escaped without loss of life.

Schools and churches were pressed into immediate service as evacuation centers.

The National Guard arrived, bolstered by the Army Reserve.

In make-shift command posts, governmental officials directed rescue and salvage operations through a nightmare that had begun in the early morning hours.

Food was in short supply. Water had to be boiled.

Telephone lines were out in all the stricken areas. Ham operators and citizens band radios took on the job of communications.

St. Joseph's Hospital in Elmira and Corning Hospital in Corning were hit hard and patients were evacuated later.

Water was as high as 12 feet in some areas.

Gas and electric services were disrupted.

The Twin Tiers, it seemed, was sinking into the sea.

Travel was severely restricted as bridges washed out and roads became impassable.

Elmira's Southside was cut off from the rest of the city when all four bridges were damaged or destroyed and Fitch's Bridge at Golden Glow Heights washed out. Supplies were ferried by helicopter.

Rural communities were hit hard.

Monroeton near Towanda saw all its 500 residents evacuated. Chemung — between Elmira and the Valley — lost house after house to the raging torrent.

The scene was the same throughout the Twin Tiers — swollen rivers and streams, flooded streets, homes off their foundations or gone downstream, trees torn out by the roots, possessions floating to oblivion.

That was early Friday.

By midday, the rivers had begun to crest.

By mid-afternoon, the water began to recede.

The immediate danger was over. Other problems would begin to emerge.

Curfews were clamped on many affected areas.

Some sectors were sealed off because of possible health hazards.

National Guardsmen patrolled business and residential areas to guard against looting.

Other volunteers set up patrol units to protect unattended properties.

A call went out for all able-bodied persons to help tend the evacuees, work at the hospitals and make-shift infirmaries and begin to bring order out of chaos.

The rain continued — but it had less menace.

Ararat had been reached by nightfall.

Water St., Elmira, Friday, June 23

The Fourth Day: Devastation

Water played tricks in Corning

Saturday, June 24, 1972

The gaping wounds of the Twin Tiers lay exposed today.

Devastation was everywhere.

The musty smell of wet wood and cloth permeated the air.

Debris littered streets, yards and homes. Homes that still stood, that is, for many had been swept away by the roaring current.

And there was mud. Every place—mud.

It was the aftermath of the greatest flood in Twin Tier history.

No one could predict when evacuees could return to their homes. Or even if they would find them.

Elmira and Corning were like armed camps. Military personnel, carrying fixed bayonets on bullet-less rifles, were everywhere. Directing traffic. Or just watching stores and homes which gaped at passersby through empty windows.

Work began on inspecting houses. Orange and black signs began to dot the landscape. "Take notice," they said. "This building is declared unsafe."

Only one bridge—on Lake St.—was usable in Elmira, and that was just for emergency traffic.

Food began to arrive in massive quantities.

Water tankers unloaded their cargoes after trips of up to 100 miles.

Volunteers began arriving from throughout the East and as far away as Canada to help with the cleanup job.

Utilities were in bad shape.

In Chemung County, only the Horseheads telephone exchange was usable. There were almost no phones in Corning.

Water lines were ruptured. Gas service was cut off to the most heavily damaged areas for fear of explosions. Electrical power was sporadic.

When power failed at St. Joseph's Hospital and Corning Hospital, patients who could be moved were evacuated to other medical facilities.

By mid-afternoon, Elmira firemen had logged more than 400 major emergency calls in 41 hours. The effort was repeated in many communities, although Corning had little problem with fires.

Evacuation centers remained jammed, especially Elmira College, which virtually turned over its campus to refugees, city officials and relief agencies.

Utilities began bringing in workmen from as far away as New York City to help restore service.

Cleanup crews were organized and working in communities such as Blossburg, Mansfield, Lawrenceville and Tioga in Pennsylvania.

School and governmental officials began meeting to check possible state and federal aid.

Most Red Cross units still hadn't been able to communicate with division headquarters but were functioning locally while they waited for more assistance.

Gov. Rockefeller and Sen. Javits flew into the Chemung County Airport for a brief tour of Elmira and Corning. They said Chemung County was hit hardest in New York State and offered sympathy and aid as fast as it could be mustered.

The job of assessing damage got underway along with the housekeeping necessities. The loss would be in the multi-millions.

Pharmacies opened their stores of medical supplies. Coordination began on storage and distribution of food and clothing.

There was despair, relief, depression and prayers of thanks.

All attention focused on the cleanup job ahead.

The river ran wild through the streets of Corning

The Fifth Day:
A Legacy of Mud

High water balancing act

Sunday, June 25, 1972

The Twin Tiers began totting up its flood losses today. They were massive.

Seven of the 16 known dead were identified in the Corning-Painted Post area—where the toll finally reached 22.

A man's body was recovered from the Susquehanna River in the Towanda area.

Athens Mayor Theodore Fink set his borough's damage at $35-$70 million and declared, "The whole business section is wiped out."

At least one-third of Blossburg's buildings were affected.

Three of Elmira's five bridges were ruled unsafe, and a fourth had only limited traffic.

Corning Glass Center officials, whose museum was the repository for many priceless glass objects, hadn't put a dollar figure on the loss. They only knew that many artifacts could never be replaced.

Corning Glass Works began cleaning up, and officials said the damage would be in the multi-millions of dollars.

So it was throughout the Twin Tiers.

As residents began returning to their homes to check the damage, however, Big Flats was sealed off.

The entire hamlet of 2,500 was evacuated. There was danger from nearly one-half million gallons of gasoline pouring from huge tanks in the western section.

Natural gas lines also had ruptured on Canal St., spewing fumes into the air.

Fire was a major hazard.

Lawrenceville residents returning after the Tioga and Cowanesque Rivers had receded found incredible damage. Nothing had escaped the pounding water.

Someone said it looked like a "madman on a bulldozer hit the town." Everywhere, there was debris from as far as 20 miles up the river.

Mansfield residents, many of whom had spent the night in Mansfield State College dormitories, were luckier. There was property loss but not nearly as much as Lawrenceville and Millerton.

Corning was among the worst — especially on the Northside.

Entire streets were masses of wreckage. Few homes had garages left — and many houses either had disappeared or moved off their foundations.

The slow restoration of services to the city hampered cleanup efforts, and utilities said it might takes weeks to provide gas and electricity.

In Elmira, the downtown, Southside and Eastside were the most heavily damaged.

St. Joseph's Hospital on the Eastside put its loss at around $4 million, including $2 million in equipment alone. It continued to operate on an emergency basis with only 56 patients on one floor.

The fear of typhoid from contaminated water brought thousands of Chemung County residents to clinics for shots. The county health officer said they weren't needed but added: "It's a matter of calming down hysteria. If some of these people don't get the shots, they'll shoot us."

Reps. Howard Robison and James Hastings visited Elmira, and Robison toured the city. "We'll break our backs for you," he said after seeing the destruction.

In some respects, today was a study in-contrasts.

Areas like Horseheads seemed normal, havens of sanity. People went to church dressed in their Sunday best.

For thousands of others, it was simply Flood Day Plus Two.

Water at rest. A deceptively peaceful suburban scene

The Sixth Day: Massive Cleanup

High and dry

Monday, June 26, 1972

The Twin Tiers armed itself today with shovels, mops and brooms and began the horrendous job of digging itself out.

There still seemed to be no end to the mud.

It clung to everything — inside and outside. A musty dampness filled the air. Everywhere. There was grime and rust and rot. Yet the people tackled the cleanup job with optimism and elbow grease.

Top priority went to sanitary conditions, utilities and water.

Elmira's water supply was still precarious, and Corning was virtually without any. Service lines in both communities were leaking badly from the pounding of the flood.

Corning, which had been without telephone service, had some lines restored. Long-distance cables were still out.

Elmira's phone situation was improving but still not fully recovered.

At least one-third of Elmira's homes were without gas. Lines were shut off so crews could check them for damage.

Power was off in the Elmira business district. Underground vaults had to be drained of water and checked. It looked like a 10-day blackout in store.

Gas meters were being checked in Corning, and some electrical service was expected to be restored within 48 hours.

Limited mail service started in Elmira and Corning, with Corning letters being flown out by helicopter.

Everyone worried about bad water, spoiled food and proper disposal of waste material.

Teams of state pure food and drug inspectors seizure notices on all flood-affected restaurants, food stores and liquor stores in the Corning area "as a precaution."

People began the agonizing return to their homes to pick up the pieces of their lives again.

The scars were everywhere.

Many roads were still closed, particularly those near the rivers. Bridges were out. Yet trucks continued to rumble in with supplies.

Owners of badly damaged homes or business places were warned to stay away until the premises had been inspected. Fifteen Elmira buildings already had been condemned and couldn't be used until repaired or rebuilt.

Big Flats continued to be a major headache. It remained sealed off while crews sucked up the spilled gasoline spilled from ruptured storage tanks.

Traffic was a problem. Police were trying to cope with a buildup from sightseers and area residents funneled into just a few streets because of the lack of bridges.

The Red Cross set up emergency meal and grocery centers in Chemung County with the help of the Army Reserve. This began to take pressure off evacuation centers.

Elmira contractors organized and arranged with local banks to establish a fund of $150 million to draw on for payrolls so rebuilding work can start immediately.

Corning Glass Works hoped to resume production at two factories as soon as gas and power became available—but Ingersoll-Rand at Painted Post still was cleaning up and hadn't made an assessment.

Piles of debris dotted the landscape throughout the Twin Tiers.

Plywood became a premium item as businessmen and homeowners began boarding up shattered windows.

Relief agencies moved into high gear in new offices set up in strategic locations.

The Twin Tiers was slowly coming back to life.

Houses swept from their foundations in South Corning

The Seventh Day: Some Normality

High perch in Elmira

Tuesday, June 27, 1972

The dusty, mud-besmirched Twin Tiers began returning to a semblance of normality today.

Just a semblance, though.

The basic mood was thankfulness. For living through the flood. For finding some way to salvage a way of life.

Underlying it, however, were various moods of helplessness, bitterness, resentment and bewilderment. It depended on how hard each person was hit.

The question on everyone's lips was: "Where do you begin."

But they began.

An Elmira businessman summed it up: "I'm so mad . . . I don't know who I'm mad at, but I'm so goddam mad . . . . that I absolutely will go back into business."

He wasn't alone.

Transportation facilities were operating at close to normal conditions.

The New York State Employment Service opened its Elmira office, and the Social Security Administration planned to resume Wednesday.

Residents of Corning's Northside, many of them in Beaver Valley evacuation centers, were bused into their home areas and allowed to stay until 5 p.m.

The first of four Red Cross relief centers opened in Corning.

Elmira started its Red Ball Expressway to help traffic across the lone usable bridge on Lake St.

At Flood Day Plus Four, here was how things looked:

Elmira — Sections are still without gas, but the situation was improving. Electricity and telephone service were becoming available. Water still was being boiled.

Corning — Some gas service was restored, but power remained sporadic. Few telephones were usable. No one had water service, except from tanks throughout the city. Agencies set up temporary offices for unemployment checks, Social Security and food and clothing distribution.

Athens — Flood victims were allowed back into the stricken area to start the long cleanup process. The only utility not restored was telephones. There were no restrictions on water use. Sightseers were a problem.

Towanda — Evacuation centers began to thin out as more roads became passable. Electricity was restored to most of the area. Gasoline sales were banned to reduce the traffic. Helicopters flew in food and supplies. Civil Defense volunteers were helping in the cleanup, particularly in the hard-hit Monroeton and Powell areas.

Tioga — Water was a problem because one of the reservoir's two links to the borough had been cut off. The 700 evacuees had begun returning home to find nearly every building with some damage. The borough landfill and its access road had been destroyed, and there was a problem in disposing of debris.

Mansfield — A large number of homes were damaged, but the business district — on higher ground — escaped. Telephone service was restored inside the borough. About 30 mobile homes south of the borough had been lost.

Lawrenceville — Telephone service was still out, power was curtailed and gas lines and pipes had burst. Virtually every building had been hit by high water. The massive cleanup job was just getting into gear.

Blossburg — The water supply was restricted, and telephone service and electrical services were damaged. Residents of Riverside Park, evacuated to nearby Blossburg State Hospital, began returning. The mayor asked everyone to help in the cleanup.

Elkland — Damage was relatively minor at Elkland, with few evacuees. Osceola had more flooding, and its main road was undermined at the approach to the Main St. bridge.

The overall assessment — Work ahead for everyone.

Mighty water overturned this truck in Elmira

The Eighth Day:
One-Stop Relief

Salvaged in Elmira

Wednesday, June 28, 1972

Flood relief became available today in massive, "one-step" doses.

Using a lesson learned from the disaster at Rapid City, S.D., state, federal and private agencies combined to set up a one-step service center at the Remington Rand parking lot on Elmira's Southside.

It was a system to be duplicated later in other Elmira locations and in Corning.

It offered money both in loans and in grants, medicine and consumable supplies and other types of assistance to flood victims.

Meanwhile, attention was focused on the Twin Tiers' most pressing need—housing.

Corning especially was in dire need.

With its Northside ravaged, the city asked the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to secure mobile homes for the thousands still homeless.

Corning officials warned against returning to uninspected homes, and more than 6,000 persons remained in evacuation centers.

Some Corning Glass Works production began, but Ingersoll-Rand figured two-three weeks before any production could start.

CGW set up a loan office, and a Social Services Department team took applications for public assistance.

Elsewhere, the picture became more encouraging. Here's how it looked:

Hospitals—Operating but burdened many times their capacity.

Banking — Service available, but you had to look for locations that were open.

Electricity—Power on in areas not affected by the flood but still only partially restored elsewhere.

Postal — Service limited. No door-to-door deliveries. Some branches open.

Gas — One-third of Elmira's gas service shut off until further notice. Sections of Corning's Southside and Addison being served. Outlying areas are in both cities back on gas lines.

Water — Everyone boiling it.

The outlook on Elmira's bridges was gloomy. The best estimate was that it would take four-six months to restore a second river crossing. That later became weeks.

About 2,000 persons remained in evacuation centers — well cared for but mostly champing to get out and start resettling.

The problem: At least 700 Elmira homes on both sides of the river aren't expected to be habitable. In fact, the Chemung County Board of Realtors estimated that 7,000 dwellings had been damaged by the flood.

In the Valley, Waverly was virtually back to normal while Athens tried to cope with the dust that plagued everyone in the flooded sectors.

The Keuka Lake area, where the water level had risen five feet, worried about its tourist season.

And Hornell, where it all started, had cleaned up and was looking ahead with considerable optimism.

Everyone seemed to know what had to be done—and the major overhaul was getting started.

Businessmen in Elmira, Corning and Athens were finding temporary locations or selling from second floors in flooded areas.

There was talk of rebuilding everywhere.

Volunteers were pitching in to work on the cleanup.

The spirit of cooperation—so apparent during the flood emergency—had not dimmed.

Toppled lamp makes an artistic arrangement in Elmira

The Ninth Day: An Agnew Visit

Debris lines an Elmira sidewalk

Thursday, June 29, 1972

Vice President Spiro Agnew came to the Twin Tiers today and brought sympathy and the promise of swift, massive federal aid.

He made a quick stop in Corning and then flew into Elmira for a tour and press conference.

Elmira Mayor Richard Loll put it on the line for the vice president:

"Get Congress off their butts to give us help. If we can give Nicaragua and Pakistan millions, how about us Americans? Now and not later. No promises. We need action now."

Agnew was optimistic that there would be governmental help — soon.

There was optimism in other areas as well.

Restrictions were lifted on using water for the Elmira cleanup, although residents still had to boil it before drinking it.

Officials said bids were out on 5000 mobile homes for the Twin Tier homeless and 3,000 sites had been located for modular housing.

The Small Business Administration said it had received 2,620 applications for financial aid — and more were coming in at the rate of one every minute. The estimate was that $160 million would be needed for rehabilitation.

The Elmira cleanup job was progressing rapidly. In fact, officials said a truck loaded with flood debris was entering a dump site every four seconds.

Power was restored to most of the 11,400 customers in Corning and 8,900 in Elmira left without electricity.

Long-distance telephone cables were still not functioning at full capacity, but local service was virtually restored.

Pennsylvania wasn't recovering quite as fast, partially because the damage was so heavy in relatively sparsely settled areas.

About 600 evacuees were still being fed daily at Williamson Junior-Senior High School in Tioga Junction, for example, and another 900 volunteer helpers were eating there.

Leaking dikes in Lawrenceville, which had eight feet of water in the center of the borough, didn't help the situation. All Tioga County water was being boiled.

HUD teams were in Wellsboro and Towanda to take housing applications, but site offers were just trickling in. It was the same in Elmira, where response was poor to continued appeals for emergency housing.

The Elmira sewage treatment plant was being repaired, and the Athens plant was only a few weeks away from full restoration.

Day care centers were reestablished in Chemung County as well as in Bradford, which had lost two of the buildings it was using.

Everyone was helping.

About 50-75 Elmira Correctional Facilities inmates went out for cleanup work in three Chemung County towns, while others butchered 20 tons of meat and refrigerated it for future use in an evacuation center. Monterey camp inmates worked in Corning.

The area received a jolt when the U.S. Weather Bureau warned of possible flash floods Friday or Saturday. The Army Corps of Engineers promptly began sandbagging breaks in the river dike between Corning and Painted Post.

But the heavy rains never materialized. It would have been just too much if they had.

Water left a chair in a tree on this Elmira lawn

The 10th Day:
A Turning Point

A parking meter in Elmira

Friday, June 30, 1972

Today marked a turning point in the Twin Tier recovery effort.

Elmira businessmen reemphasized their intention to restore the downtown district.

A new concept of urban renewal for housing was urged for the flood-stricken area following Vice President Spiro Agnew's visit.

The Corning Common Council gave the city's mayor blanket authorization to apply for any available aid.

The industrial community was moving toward nearly normal operation.

The New York State Urban Development Corp. combined with the Housing and Urban Development Corp. to seek emergency housing quickly.

And the Red Cross said it discontinued the distribution of bulk, unprocessed food to flood victims on Elmira's Northside because the situation was so much improved there.

They were the signs of communities beginning to think in terms of rehabilitation and recovery, not devastation and disaster.

The business view was summed up by an Elmira spokesman thusly: "It's only been about a week, but it seems like an eternity since last Friday."

Then the 200 businessmen formed a committee, made plans to get back in business and heard the city manager promise cooperation from all angles.

Meanwhile, representatives of 12 Twin Tier counties presented a petition to President Nixon asking him to free portions of federal highway funds for the Chemung-Steuben area. And the Chemung County chairman said he had assurance that the federal government would pay for bridges.

That looked like the case when U.S. funds became available to replace the two-span Walnut St., bridge.

The UDC participation also broadened when the state agency expressed interest in becoming part of an overall program to rebuild portions of the city of Elmira.

Those development came later, but they were presaged by the Friday events.

Meanwhile, restoration activity continued.

Units of military police arrived to replace National Guardsmen who had left.

The Red Cross took over the food distribution center for Chemung and Steuben Counties at the Chemung County Fairgrounds.

Most utilities were back in service in the Valley area, but water was still being boiled.

Ingersoll-Rand intensified its cleanup operation at Painted Post by calling in all main plant employes.

Chemung County accountants offered free financial services for all disaster-affected residents.

Food stamps were offered free to all flood victims through the Chemung County Social Services Department.

And so it went.

Services were made available —mostly without charge.

Cellars were being pumped out by Navy and National Guard crews, and volunteers were still much in evidence throughout the area.

More and more residents were returning to their homes or making other arrangements on a permanent basis.

Everyone knew it would be months—possibly years—before the ravages of the flood could be erased. But spirits were high.

The Twin Tiers was meeting the challenge.

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At left, an Elmira scene

Water St., Elmira, Friday, June 23

The Chemung River pours into Elmira's Northside

A residential scene in Elmira

A mill pond effect

A typical flood scene in Chemung County

An airview of a portion of Elmira's Southside, June 23

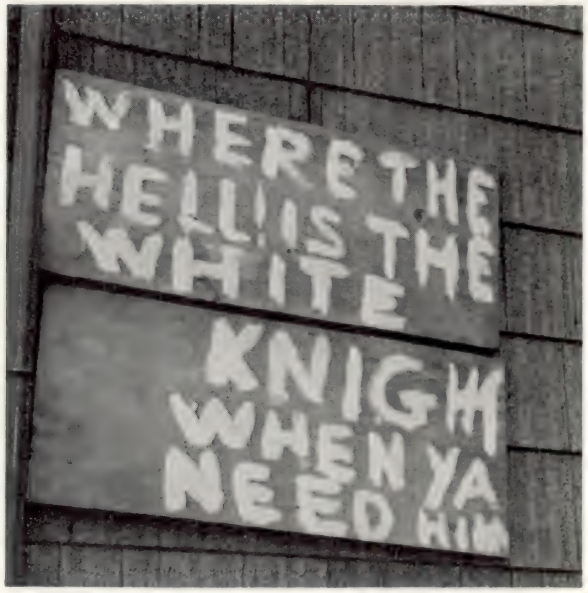
Mud deposits coat a sidewalk in Elmira

A city employe plows mud on Elmira's Southside

Pounds of mud and silt clog Elmira streets

Cleanup in Elmira

A quick wash in Elmira



Sign of the times

Washing mud from household linen in South Corning

A boy cleans mud from an Elmira street

Flood waters tossed concrete slabs as if they were wafers

A bridge kept this suburban home from washing into the sea

Flood waters tossed houses around like matchsticks

Water washed this Millport home off its foundation and into Catharine Creek

The Highway Of the Flood

Just as Gen. Sherman laid waste the state of Georgia in the Civil War, so armies of river water left nothing but destruction and devastation in the wake of their march through the Twin Tiers a month ago.

Thousands of residents who were forced to flee from their homes to escape the onslaught have now returned to pick up the pieces—what pieces are left.

They were trapped in Riverside

Where They Flow

The Great Flood of 1972 resulted from the overflow of five rivers fed by numerous creeks swollen by 11.6 inches of rain.

Canacadea Creek pushed over in Almond, sending high water through the Almond Dam and into Hornell. Big Creek overflowed in the Village of North Hornell and Crosby Creek spilled over in the City of Hornell.

All these creeks dump into the Canisteo River in the city.

From there the Canisteo flows southeasterly through Canisteo and past Cameron, Cameron Mills, Addison and into the Tioga River flowing north through Erwin to Painted Post.

The Tioga, which comes from Mansfield, Tioga and Lawrenceville, runs into Painted Post where it joins with the Conhocton to form the Chemung.

From there, the Chemung flows easterly through Corning, Big Flats, Elmira, Lowman, Wellsburg, Chemung and Athens into the Susquehanna River. The Susquehanna runs south through Ulster and Towanda.

The Conhocton starts in Steuben County north of Cohocton and flows southeasterly through Avoca, Kanona, Bath, Savona, Campbell, Coopers Plains and into Painted Post to meet the Tioga-Canisteo.

While the Canisteo, Tioga, Conhocton, Chemung and Susquehanna are the big rivers that wreaked the most havoc, numerous smaller creeks feeding into them caused extensive damage on their own.

Bennett's Creek carrying water from Purdy Creek south of Canisteo hit that area hard. Cutler Creek caused many problems in Riverside between Painted Post and Corning and Towanda Creek left 16 inches of mud in lowland farm fields southeast of Towanda.

Many are now homeless refugees living with friends and relatives, trying to rebuild their lives. But, although they lost a battle, they haven't lost the war.

Talking with at least a hundred of these hardy souls gave ample evidence of the indomitable human spirit.

Mother Nature packs a pretty good wallop.

She started throwing it at us about June 20 with a deluge of rain. It came down harder than many people ever saw it that Tuesday night. The following day, Wednesday, June 21, Almond, Hornell and Canisteo were hit with flash flooding.

A record rainfall was responsible.

Almond Dam engineers Carl Poyer and Hank West said 11.6 inches of rain fell through the period June 20-24, pushing the June total to 14.76 inches. Poyer and West pointed out that the record high for the month of June had been 5.7 inches in 1960.

Rumors ran rampant on Friday, June 23, that the Almond Dam had broken. People in Elmira, being hit by flooding that day, feared this would wipe out the entire area.

The rumors were just that, but Poyer and West conceded that the water level from the Canacadea came within 1.4 feet of going over the spillway at the dam, located between Almond and Hornell.

That meant 69 feet of water was stacked up behind the dam at 5 a.m. that Friday.

West explained that constituted 14,400 acre feet of water and that an acre foot of water contains 43,500 gallons.

Therefore the awesome sum of 626,400,000 gallons of water was poised for a strike on the whole valley to Hornell and surrounding terrain.

"The level stayed within 1.4 feet of the spillway for about an hour that Friday morning," said Poyer, an Arkport resident who's been assistant dam operator for the Army Corps of Engineers for 11 years.

"Then it began to drop and by midnight Friday night it was 8½ feet below the spillway. If it had gone over the spillway, we would have had no more control with our gates."

Poyer said that contrary to the rumors, if the water had gone over, Elmira would experience only a slight rise in the river. Poyer said side streams would take up much of the excess water.

Water was 18 feet high across Rt. 21 at Webbs Crossing near Almond. When it finally subsided days later so the road could be opened, motorists could see brown leaves high in the trees along the Almond-Hornell road.

Two days before the crisis point at the dam, the Canacadea's flash flooding at Almond cost the lives of John Ide and his five-

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year-old daughter, Aimee. They were swept away by 4-5 feet of murderous current after getting into his fiberglass boat in front of his gas station at 22 Main St.

Mr. Ide's wife, Dorothy, and 16-year-old daughter, Renee, clung to trees and were rescued by Tom Edgreen, Trooper Jake Stewart and Hornell firemen Phil and Fran Prunoske, Don Kelly and Bill McMordie.

Edgreen, who works at the Mobile station now being run by Mr. Ide's brother-in-law, Robert Jay and he watched from across the street as Mr. Ide went for his boat at the rear of the station, which practically sits on the creek, and then came to the front.

"The water out front had no ripples," said Edgreen, who lives at 15 Main St., Almond. "It was smooth as glass so you couldn't tell how fast the current was.

"Mr. Ide left because a 55-gallon drum of white gas had tipped over and he was afraid it might explode."

The 36-year-old Ide and his daughter haven't been found.

The entire population of Almond, about 700 persons, was evacuated when a wall of water built up behind a Southern Tier Expressway roadbed at Carr Valley. Edgreen said the wall of water had to measure at least 80 feet in depth.

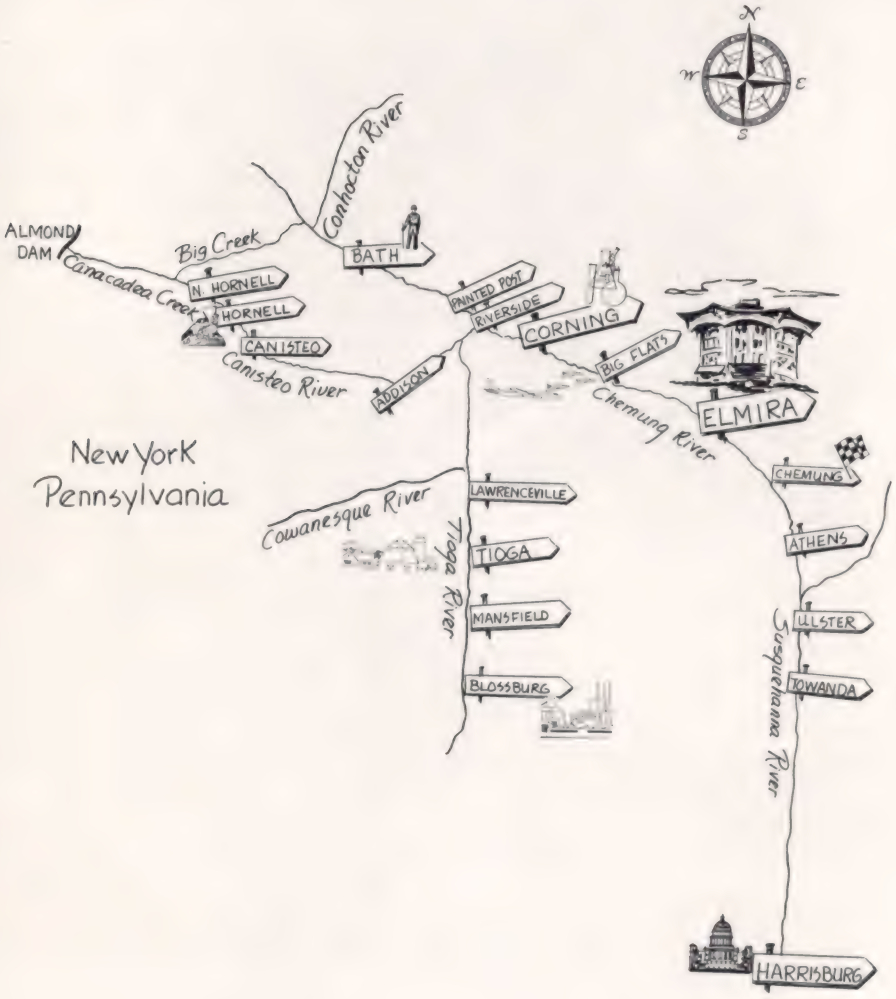
The construction roadbed proved to be a good dam and the water didn't get through.

The trailer homes of Ronald Crisis and former mayor Lawrence(Bus)Perry were hit hard by the rampaging Canacadea. Guy Washburn's home also was washed out.

Although the City of Hornell got off comparatively easy, the village of North Hornell was hit hard at its northernmost extremity by Big Creek, which comes into the area from Howard to the east.

Water rushing with tremendous force

(Continued on Page 36.)



Flood damage at Bath

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(Continued from Page 35.)

around a bend slammed hard into Welland Green's house at the end of McKinley Ave. and knocked the foundation right out from under it. The river ate away through the dike and 10 feet of earth to reach the home of the retired railroader and band leader.

Neighbors Hugh Mortimer, Tom McShane and Kenneth Beckerink said at least 25 homes were evacuated that Wednesday morning, June 21.

Although some two blocks south of the creek, the home of William Somers was hit particularly hard, including the $7,000 addition he'd put on recently. A single current of rushing water which swung wide over the dike seemed to pick out his house.

Somers recalls that morning of June 21 this way:

"I am a volunteer fireman and I heard the fire siren about 5:15 a.m. so I went down to the fire station. But there wasn't any fire. They told me to go back to my own neighborhood and get everybody out."

Somers said they got all the cars out, except that of Hornell High School principal Michael Durso of Rural Ave. His station wagon got buried in his below-ground garage.

"About 9:30 a.m. we thought it was all over and figured we were lucky because we hadn't gotten too much water," said Somers. "But about an hour and a half later we were under water."

Somers said the clean-up project in the neighborhood got underway as soon as they could get back. But he said sightseers proved something of a hindrance.

"They'd drive through here and raise the dust and a couple of them got stuck in the mud, so we had to go and push them out.

"We put up a sign at Cleveland Ave. and Rural Ave. which said, 'Sightseers please keep out." But that didn't work. So we put up another sign which said, "Sightseers stay the hell out.'

"That seemed to work."

Somers and the others praised each other for the spirit of togetherness that went into the start of clean-up. They said that contractor John Patton, who built most of the homes, lent much of his equipment, even though he doesn't live in the area.

Mortimer passed his power vacuum around and Duane Waufle, who lives across the street from Somers, was of considerable help with his tractor. The neighbors also praised numerous teen-agers who pitched in to help.

"The most marvelous neighbors in the world are right here," said McShane, a Hornell High Teacher. "Everyone minds their own business — until someone has trouble."

The City of Hornell was hit more by water running off east hill than by overflows from the Canisteo River or Crosby Creek. Dennis Ave. runs beside the Canisteo River but the three feet of water on it came from Tobes Hill, not the river. Glen Ave. and other eastside streets got some runoff water from steams like Chauncey Run.

The Erie Lackawanna Railroad yards to the southeast of the city were under water for awhile. Railroader John Todd, who was working in the yards, said the area was like a lake.

"I never saw rain come down so hard," said the railroad veteran of 42 years. "A fellow I work with, Dan Berry, had his good golf umbrella, but the rain just pounded right through it."

Canisteo also was comparatively lucky, said William Preston, who noted that the Canisteo River didn't go over its banks in the village. Two or three feet of water on Main St. came from runoff, Preston said.

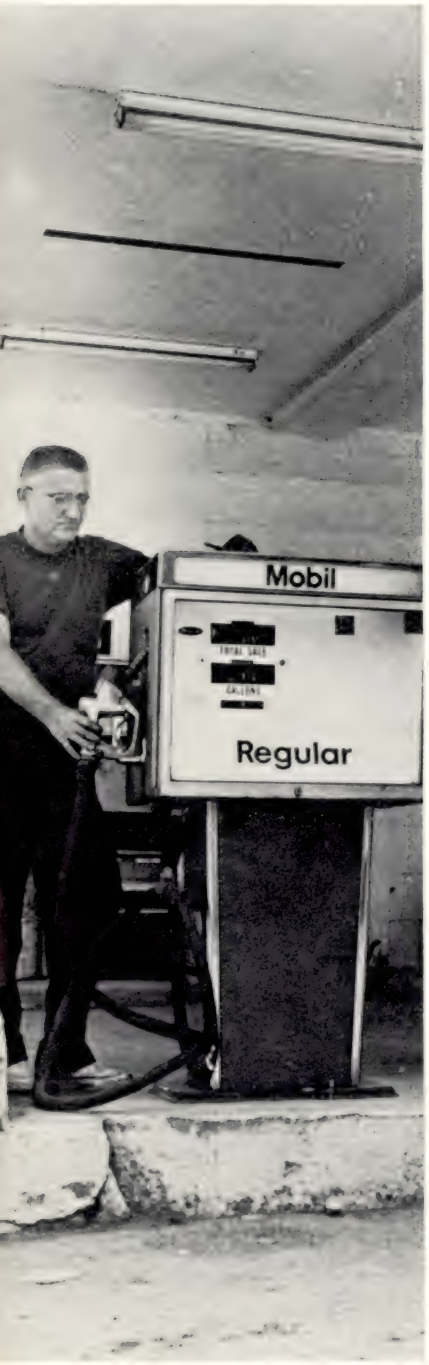
To the southeast, however, Bennett's Creek raised havoc with homes along Willow Bend Road just past Silver Bridge and the village line.

Widow Madeline Westbrook's $6,000 trailer got a foot and a half of the creek in its living quarters. The Robert Shelter trailer next door suffered an estimated $500 in damage.

Widow Gladys Follamsbee lost her car next to her trailer at the rear of the trailer park owned by Harland Zellar, who lives in a house next to the park.

"This hit on that Wednesday morning, the first day of summer," said Mrs. Zellar.

(Continued on Page 37.)



Survivor at Almond

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"Nobody could get over it being the first day of summer.

"We went to my father's on Fourth St. in the village, but the water started to come up on the dikes so they evacuated us again to Sommers Hall." Mrs. Zellar said the experience of getting out in early morning was a traumatic one for their daughter, 11.

Asked later what she thought of the whole thing, Virginia wrinkled up her nose and said, "Yuck; I didn't like it."

Down the road a piece, Mr. and Mrs. Michael Stephens surveyed what was left of their greenhouses which comprised Stepehen's Gardens.

"We've been here 50 years and his parents lived here," said Mrs. Stephens, a young and hardy 66-year-old. The Stephenses were hit by a torrent of rushing water directed right at their old home by a channel dug out from Bennettt's creek, which flows away from their house.

"They turned the river right towards the house instead of letting it go on its way."

The Stephenses said neighbors Mr. and Mrs. Jay Schenck called police to help get them out when waters began to rise.

"It was like a river right through here," said Stephens. "They took us out in one of those big amphibious army trucks. They laid a ladder from the back of the truck to the porch and we crawled across that."

Stephens, 70, got an inkling of what was coming about 5 that morning when he arose to the sound of what was to be the last Erie Lackawanna Railroad train going by across the flats.

"It sounded funny to me, like there was water in the flats as the train went across," said Stephens. "So I checked outside and there was water right up to the road."

Although they lost a half acre of peas and some berries, the Stephenses had sold a thousand dozen of their special petunias before the flood hit.

From Canisteo southeasterly to Addison, the Canisteo River caused little property damage. It parallels what residents call the River Road, as scenic a drive as you can take, but it is well away from most of the sparsely scattered homes.

You knew the Canisteo was flowing nearby, however. A few bridges were partially knocked out and pavement was ripped up. Giant trees along the river bank were uprooted and bent eastward by the force of the rampaging river.

The Big Creek, which parallels Rt. 70, or the Big Creek Road, disrupted some pavement and bridges between Howard and Hornell.

The Conhocton River, a trout fishing haven, made a big noise in the quiet little community of Kanona west of Bath.

Henry M. Stanton lost his Starlite Drive-In hot dog stand on Rt. 15 to five feet of water and his son, Arthur, lost his Twin Kiss ice cream stand across the road. In addition, Arthur lost his new trailer which was behind the stand. The 14-ton trailer was tipped onto its side.

Stanton estimated his loss at $30,000 including 2,500 pounds of frozen foods and all his refrigeration equipment.

Corwin Gordon and his son, James, got nearly two feet of water in their Texaco service station at the corner of the Campbell Creek Road. But they got cleaned up hurriedly and opened in about three days.

A bit west of there and sitting right on the old river is, or was, Austindale Camp Sites, occupied for 50 years by Earl Austin, 69.

The swirling waters destroyed four campers and such items as a piano and juke box in the recreation building of the Austin building. Three camper trailers were saved, however.

"Someone said the current came through about 60 miles an hour," said Austin, who also lost 1½ tons of honey from a business he had for many years.

His daughter, Mrs. Dewey Conrad, who lives behind her parents, said construction on the Southern Tier Expressway to the west was partly responsbile for the destruction to the Austin's property.

She said a temporary construction bridge for heavy equipment backed up the water for a mile and a half.

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Red Ball Express, Lake St., Elmira

An engineer, his successful dam

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"The camping business is done for this year," said Austin. "I've been told it'll take 1,000 loads of top soil and 900 hours of scraping and grading to put this back in shape."

The Austins, in their mid-60s, aren't sure if they can muster the energy to start over. He recently had an operation and she was seriously injured in an automobile accident.

The river's rampage along Rt. 15 eastward into Bath did little damage to that village with the exception of the Belfast St.-Veterans Administration Center area on the western edge of the community.

But it hit hard there.

Irwin Hodge's home at 67 Belfast St. is suspended in air where his porch and its foundation used to be. Naturally, it's been condemned as structurally unsafe and Hodge is living in the National Hotel in downtown Bath.

Across the street at 60 Belfast St. is Charlie's Inn and its proprietor, Dorothy Dougherty. Rushing water attacking from the rear tore out a wall of the tavern and gouged out the entranceway. Her home next door also was hit by up to three feet of water.

Mrs. Dougherty, who's run the tavern for 12 years, said she was lucky to get out in time.

"I was watching them evacuate this poor man down the street and feeling bad about it. But I didn't know the water was coming from behind me and all of a sudden I was standing in a couple feet of water."

She credits her grandson, Eddie Slayton, 14, of nearby West St., with warning her and her customers of the approaching flood waters.

Like many, many others, Mrs. Dougherty has obtained forms from the Small Business Administration for aid to help her get started again.

Eastward on the Conhocton River, Savona loomed ahead and appeared high and dry.

Campbell sustained some damage. The village's Little League baseball field and a playground right next to the river were heavily damaged. Numerous homes got unvited water.

The Conhocton rippled gently and shamelessly by a serene, tree-lined stretch of riverside on Mill St. in Coopers Plains. The peaceful-looking river looked not a bit like the hit and run destroyer of a few weeks earlier.

But the lovely homes and lawns along its banks and beneath the stately old trees bore all the evidence of a vicious attack.

"We probably shouldn't even be here considering what other people got," said Mrs. Robert Johnson, whose home got four feet of water despite sitting on a little rise.

"It's so peaceful here," she added. "It's like another little world. Everybody here loves it so."

"Condemned" signs on some of the dozen or so homes in this area seemed like a cruel trick played by a prankster. But the dwellings, just summer homes to some, were indeed in sad states of disrepair.

"We were aware the river could rise when we moved here," said Mrs. Johnson. "But we didn't think it would rise this much. People who've lived here a long time said the highest the water ever got was to the first floor, but not in it."

Looking out at what once was a bed of irises and peonies, Mrs. Johnson said she and her husband haven't really decided what they'll do now.

The Johnsons lived year around in their riverside home for eight years as did neighbors like Sandra White, Michael Tracy, Emmett Mallison and M. T. Ives.

Jumping from there southward a few miles to the Tioga River flowing through the community of Presho, a traveler is appalled at the destruction.

Michael Murphy, a trooper stationed at Painted Post, knows firsthand of the damage there, and not just from patrolling the area, either.

Murphy lives at 1813 State Road in Presho, which is Painted Post RD 1. The northward-flowing Tioga River just across the street deposited eight feet of water in the home he's occupied for the past six years.

The house of an elderly woman up the road slammed into his home, ripping off a corner and a bay window. Murphy said the woman subsequently died in a hospital.

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Clothes out to dry, Corning

The Highway . . .

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The rugged trooper felt badly for other residents, particularly the older ones.

"A lot of people had fixed up their homes. I've planned to renovate mine, but I hadn't started. So now I'll just go ahead and fix it over.

"The older people are hurt the worst. They've spent a lifetime building up their places. How are they going to start all over?"

Murphy's wife and three children are staying with relatives.

"I want to get the whole family together again," said the trooper, who for a while worked 12-hour shifts. "I've been sleeping here to discourage anybody from coming around. I'm hoping to get a trailer to put on the property so I can stay right here and work on the house."

Murphy, working to repair his flood-damaged washer, grinned wistfully as he pointed to a spot across the Indian Hills Golf Course near Rt. 15.

"My dog house wound up way over there. That was built better than the house. But before I could get over there and get it, somebody made off with it."

The 18-hole golf course was a mess.

Pro William Higgs said all holes suffered at least some damage. The two-story clubhouse and pro shop had water into the second floor lounge and dining room areas.

"We've got water hazards we never thought of," quipped the golf pro with a sense of humor that was refreshing.

"I'd say 85 per cent of the course needs repair," said Higgs. "We lost 80 per cent of our greens. But we're going to try to get some holes ready for the members by September or earlier."

Indian Hills has 375 members.

Higgs estimated he lost $20,000 in the pro shop and $12,000 worth of damage in his home next to the clubhouse. Higgs has been living with a friend, retired contractor Tom Hagedish of Spencer Hill, Corning.

There's $30,000 worth of trees laying down out there, too," added Higgs, pointing to a pavilion which collapsed on 12 golf carts.

Higgs couldn't say enough for seven teen-aged youths who came down from Ithaca to help under auspices of the Immaculate Conception Church.

Pointing to a couple of the lads who wore shoulder length hair, Higgs tapped his chest and said, "These kids may have long hair, but they've got it in here."

Gang Mills a couple of miles north was just as devastated as Presho.

Another Painted Post state trooper, John Mitchell, was washed out of his home on Erwin St. Water into the second floor evicted him and wrecked the basement recreation room he'd recently installed.

Yet another trooper, Larry Briggs, was a flood victim in Lindley.

Before the Tioga roared into Presho it had wreaked havoc through the towns of Blossburg, Mansfield, Tioga and Lawrenceville.

The home of the Levanduski family on Gulick St. is no more. The house, lawn, driveway and garage were swept away by the river.

Elsewhere in the town houses were flooded, sidewalks buckled and communications knocked out. One of two access routes to Blossburg State Hospital was put of commission when a section of a bridge collapsed.

A 50-foot section of a large bridge across the river south of Covington was completely washed away and many crops were destroyed.

Several business establishments were practically destroyed and individual property damage was listed as massive at Mansfield. Mansfield schools were flooded over and a number of mobile homes were either destroyed or moved off their foundations.

Asked after the flood about dollar damage, Borough Manager Thomas Farrer commented, "The more you look, the more you find."

Tioga was equally hard hit and evacuees poured into Williamson Junior-Senior High School where an average of 1,500 persons daily was fed for a time following the flood.

Volunteers came from the Elkland and Westfield areas and at one point Tioga County Commissioner William Hall commented, "Everyone here is in good spirits and their morale is high. We have a lot of volunteers who are willing to work."

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Wreckage at Athens

Shoes drying in Elmira

The Highway . . .

(Continued from Page 39.)

Lawrenceville was possibly the hardest hit of the Tioga County communities. All but two houses received flood damage.

"There's a few residents who are going to leave but I hope most residents will stay," commented Mayor Edward H. Bradshaw.

Kim Hnyda, 16-year-old daughter of Fire Chief Charles Hnyda, had difficulty in describing her emotions at the damage to the family residence.

"We had a smile on our face and everything like that but you just couldn't do anything about it. At first it seemed like my heart hit my stomach. But we didn't get it half as bad as some people."

A row of structures along Old Rt. 15-17 in Gang Mills were all condemned. A couple were no longer there, like the trailer home of Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Marvin.

"I'll sell to the fastest with the mostest," said Clarence Finley, whose property at 715 Old Rt. 15-17 was wiped out by the Tioga, which at that point had help from the contents of the Canisteo River.

"I've got one of 500 trailers coming and I'm going to put it on the highest mountain," added Finley with a smile.

A retired Corning Glass Works electrical equipment operator with 30 years service there, Finley has been staying with a brother in Hedgesville.

Painted Post, the juncture of the Conhocton and Tioga Rivers which become the Chemung, was a disaster area after June 23.

Thomas O'Malia III, son of the village mayor and with his father in O'Malia's Department Store, estimated that 85 per cent of the village was hit by flood waters which reached to nine feet in their Water St. store.

"We lost the dike to the west, then the one to the south," said O'Malia, adding that the Halgman and Erwin Hollow Creeks, meet at the west end of the village and joined the Conhocton in bursting through the dike. He said the flood gates held.

O'Malia estimated that 30 feet of water must have swept into the village, dumping up to seven feet of water as far back as his father's home near Hamilton and Imperial Sts.

At least 40 homes in this village of 2,800 were said to be condemned.

Mrs. Edward Dailey lives at 140 W. Water St. In fact, she's lived there for 35 years.

"Water St. is a good name for this street, isn't it?, chirped Mrs. Dailey. "I had water 15 inches from the ceiling in here. Some people said it came in here like on Hawaii 5-0."

Mrs. Dailey said she slept through much of the flooding.

"I went to grammar school commencement at St. Patrick's Thursday night. My sister, who lives on the hill, wanted me to stay with her that night, but I didn't. My street was pretty empty and quiet that night, though.

"I woke up about 8:30 that Friday morning and heard a gurgling noise. I thought it was the toilet. Then I checked and discovered it was up the fourth step of the stairs in the house.

"There was a swirling mass of angry waters all over.

"So I got prepared. I heard a helicopter and hollered, although I was afraid I was so scared nothing would come out."

She said that a boat eventually came down Steuben St. John Nobriga and Fred Dyer were in it and got Mrs. Dailey out of her house, ducking under low hanging wires as they went. She was evacuated to West High School.

"I guess this all means it's simply time to start over. I don't regret this. God must have had some purpose."

The waters out of the Conhocton spilled on down into the Village of Riverside and wreaked havoc on this little community of 1,100.

Former Mayor Winston Phelps estimated no more than five homes escaped flood damage. At least 15 were condemned, he guessed. Phelps said the water came down Cutler Creek from Painted Post and the traffic circle there.

"I was up all night measuring the dike at Cutler Creek," said Phelps, who lived at 6 S. Buffalo St. "Up to 1 a.m. the creek was rising at a rate of 18 inches an hour. Then it slowed to six inches an hour.

"But from 3 to 4 a.m., it was rising at 15 inches an hour. Something happened to make it do that all of a sudden."

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Madison Ave. bridge supports

The Highway . . .

(Continued from Page 40.)

Phelps got 5½ feet of water in his home, in which he'd lived for 23 years. He estimated his loss at $10,000. Now he's living at a cottage on Waneta Lake.

"I just finished renovating and figured now I could take it easy. So I've got to start all over again. But I guess I'm lucky that I've got a place to rebuild."

A house across the street no longer is there. Phelps figures that and Mrs. Roy Paddock's house at 9 Buffalo St. saved his home from additional damage.

Around the corner at 384 W. Pulteney St., Riverside, James Mitchell was pumping gas at the Rotary station he's had for 38 years. Across the street, a McDonald's Restaurant sign was all that remained from the business there.

"I'm supposed to be dead," laughed the 79-year-old Mitchell. "Down at the post office the other day, this guy looked at me and said I couldn't be Jim Mitchell because he was dead. I got that about four times."

Mitchell explained that he spent 27 hours in his attic window trying to attract the attention of someone who'd get him, his wife and mother-in-law out of the place. They had no food. The Mitchell's home is downstairs attached to the stateion.

A friend, Ruth Delorrain of Painted Post, saw them Saturday morning. A little later an Army truck took them away to the evacuation center at Winfield School.

Continuing eastward along Pulteney St., one comes into the neighborhood known as Corning's Houghton Plot.

"The dike broke at Riverside, then it broke here," said Raymond Mann, who sold his house as it stood at 47 Houghton Circle. Mann will buy a mobile home and settle in East Corning.

"We were all hit from behind here," said the retired Corning Glass Works shipping supervisor. Mann said water reached the ceiling of the home he'd lived in since 1946.

Next door, William (Pete) Evans of 39 Houghton Circle also had a "For Sale" sign on the home he'd occupied since 1925 or 1926. Evans, 70, said he just got out in time as the waters rushed in June 23.

He cited poor communications as the reason some barely got out, leaving no time to get anything else out.

"We were complacent," said the retired insurance man. "We didn't get any water in 1935 or 1946 so we didn't think we'd get much this time.

Evans said he heard cries for "Help" as he made his way through a gray dawn to the safety of Denmark Hill. Evans said 30 people were in some of the houses there.

"We were out of food so this TWA flyer, Gordon Burgess, went down to Pulteney St. in a boat and rescued some K-rations and brought them up to us."

Across the street from Mann and Evans sat a green house partially sticking out into the roadway. This used to be the home of Valentine Doran Jr. of 33 Houghton Circle.

It has been ripped clean off its foundation next to Evans.

Ed Collins and family had moved into a brand new house at 21 Houghton Circle in March. The other day, the pretty blue house stood broken and twisted on its foundation, somebody else's house leaning against it.

This ravaged sector of the Crystal City had nothing on the River St. neighborhood when it came to looking like the demilitarized zone in Vietnam.

The Chemung River crashed through the dike at two spots along River St. At both spots were gas and electric towers which carry high tension lines.

Next to the biggest break stood a large gap in the row of disheveled houses. Three homes had been there. They're gone now.

Charles Spernyak stood on the spot of his former home at 67 River St. and pointed off towards Weaver St. at part of a structure on the ground. This was the second story of his home. He didn't know where the first floor was.

Spernyak was waiting for inspectors to come and officially condemn what was left of his home for the last 40 years.

"If the dike hadn't broken, I don't think the water would have come over," said James Strawser as he looked at his crippled

Flood victims walk through debris

(Continued on Page 42.)

Stocking up in Corning

A Corning scene

The Highway . . .

(Continued from Page 41.)

house at 68 Weaver St., where he'd lived since 1930.

"At least I didn't get any water in the second floor," added Strawser, whose son, Donald, was washed out of 73 River St. "But I'll try and fix it up. I had to put $2,000 into the front room last year."

Five elderly residents lost their lives in this neighborhood, said Kenneth Preset as he sat beside a big, old house twisted off its foundation at Wallace and William Sts.

"I saw an old woman float out of her bedroom. She was found by Crystal City Bakery about four blocks away. Another woman drowned in her home and they didn't find her for a week."

Preset, a former Corningite who was visting from Florida when the flood hit, said many elderly residents refused to leave their homes, claiming that if the 1935 and 1946 floods didn't hurt them, this one wouldn't.

"The only thing that came out of this flood was neighborliness," said Mrs. Florence Preset, who lived in the home at 55 Wallace St. "Now you'll see neighbors speaking to each other."

Mrs. Preset said she lived on River St. and was never touched by the floods of 1935 and 1946.

Praising the people who took in flood refugees, Mrs. Preset said:

"Friends and neighbors are good to you, but there's still no place like home. Some people actually were waving people into their homes as they passed by."

Her daughter, Nina LaBelle, who was hard hit at her Freeman St. home in Riverside, said one home on West Hill Road, Painted Post, had 55 refugees for a week. She thought the owner's name was Frost.

Mrs. Preset was somewhat glad to see her home still in the same place when she returned, even though a live baby rattlesnake was there to greet her.

"I had been told my house was floating. Somebody on the hill had a pair of binoculars. But I didn't believe it.

"People would look at you with blank stares, like they didn't really know what was happening."

Despite all the destruction, Mrs. Preset and many others still managed to relate with smiles some lighter incidents during the flood. Mrs. Preset told about an antique water pitcher which somehow picked up a piece of Steubenware and floated almost to the top of the stairs in her home. It was found completely intact.

Mrs. Preset also was amazed that a glass crucifix, precious to her, had somehow fallen from a dresser directly onto a mattress, surviving unbroken.

Mr. and Mrs. Fred Bucher of 64 W. William St. lived next to the woman in her 80s who was found dead in her home a week after the flood.

"We've lived here 50 years and this is the first time we've been able to see the dike from here," said Mrs. Bucher of the big gap in River St. where three houses used to sit.

"We got ourselves out in time and went to Thorn St. near Stewart Park. We stayed in the car for three nights. It rained all the time. Then we went to somebody's house, which had 14 people in it."

The Buchers, now living with their son on Baker St., returned to their ruined home July 14 and were surprised to find their mail box full. Among the junk mail were some cards for Mrs. Bucher. It was her birthday.

Across the street, Mr. and Mrs. Guido Iannarilli of 69 W. William St. went through their home, which looked like it had been hit by fire. Iannarilli said he hoped to rebuild.

South Corning also was a devastated land.

James and Elizabeth Hope of 7 Wicks Blvd. figured 15-20 feet of water inundated their home. But they were glad it was still there, although the front had been partly ripped away.

The nearby home of Leo Bortle of 4 Garden St. was washed away and would up around the corner. Another home disappeared over the dike.

Joseph Kosty of 2 Wicks Blvd. stayed inside his dwelling as it floated about a block. He survived unharmed, however.

Mrs. George Brunjes of 1415 Golden Glow Drive figures it was the Tara Club which did the damage to the vital span from Golden Glow to Rt. 352.

A well known dahlia grower and holder of

(Continued on Page 43.)

The Highway . . .

(Continued from Page 42.)

175 trophies, Brunjes figures he lost 750 dahlias when the water blasted its way into the house up to the second floor.

"I could have grown dahlias on the greenhouse roof with all the mud there," quipped Brunjes, 65, who has been working hard at cleaning up while not one, but two, pacemakers help keep his heart going.

"One's a backup," said his wife.

What would Brunjes' doctor think of all this strenuous activity?

"Dr. (Alan) Preucil was out here last week shoveling mud out of the cellar," said Mrs. Brunjes. He's Brunjes' doctor.

The Brunjes, who'd lived there 35 years, were to have left for a Bermuda vacation that Friday, June 23, when the flood came. The day before, Mrs. Brunjes, an Elmira teacher, left a note pinned to the curtain for neighbors Mr. and Mrs. Melvin Dunlap, who were to look after the place.

The note read:

"You can call us ship to shore in the event of a major disaster. You know what to do with the cats . . . Don't look at the house, it's a mess!"

If there was one recurrent feature of talks with flood victims down the highway of the flood , it was the ready humor with which so many like the Brunjes faced the disaster that severely disrupted their lives.

"You'll find in a three-mile stretch along here as much destruction as any I've heard of," said Guy Peck as he stood near his overturned house along Old Rt. 17 in the Town of Chemung.

One couldn't argue with him. Two gullies off the side of the road, one at Katydid Curve, contained stacks of houses and garages piled against one another at grotesque angles.

"A 28-foot wall of water came at the back of my house," said Peck. "My house went Saturday morning (June 24), hit a trailer, knocking it into an old canal, and then hit Calvin Bacorn's house."

Only a wrought-iron porch railing remained on the foundation of Bacorn's home. To the east stood an upright tractor in a plowed field and beyond that were the homes of Bacorn and Peck with the stove and refrigerator Peck recently bought sitting out in the field.

Peck just bought his house last October. The new trailer home of John Holland joins the house of farmer Pete Luckey in the gulches. Earl Doan's house stayed put, but it's beyond repair.

David Benjamin feels fortunate his little green house stuck fast to its mooring, despite the pounding it must have taken from neighbors' homes going past.

"After we got out, I climbed the mountain up here to see if the house was still there," said Benjamin, an employe at the Bendix plant in Elmira Heights. "When I saw that Bacorn's place was gone, I lost hope. But then I spotted my place."

Benjamin somehow remains optimistic although ill fortune has plagued him the past three years.

Nearly three years ago, his son, David Jr., died at age 16 of a bad heart. Last year his daughter, Darlene, now 12, was hit by a car and was in a coma for seven weeks. This year came the flood and Benjamin lost track of Darlene for awhile when she was evacuated from St. Joseph's Hospital the day of the flood.

"So what'll happen next year?" asked Benjamin with a smile. "Bendix is moving to Mexico so maybe I'll lose my job."

Benjamin said he learned that federal flood insurance is available, although it's not advertised. He said it's given on a group basis so he's going to see the town supervisor to discuss the possibility of getting Chemung residents involved in the plan.

"I was told I could get insurance with Lloyd's of London, but what the heck. . ."

Jack Crum, who lives up the road from Benjamin, almost didn't get out of his house. Three feet of water poured into his house and chased him and his family, plus some neighbors, upstairs.

Crum went onto his roof and fired his shotgun trying to get someone's attention, while watching a barn grainery from up the road crash into his $2,000 swimming pool.

Chemung firemen Jesse Snell, Jim Ewanyk and Don Rumsey and volunteer Bob Bragg of Lowman finally got them out in a boat.

Flood victims search for belongings

(Continued on Page 44.)

Coins lined Elmira streets

The Highway . . .

(Continued from Page 43.)

Crum, a Pepsi Cola distributor in Elmira, has moved his family back into the home and is working to restore it.

Lowman didn't escape the flood waters. Herb and Lee Abbott's Tomahawk Restaurant on Rt. 17 got nearly three feet of water, but a yeoman clean-up effort by employes and others enabled it to reopen within 10 days.

Bentley Creek was the big culprit in Wellsburg, said Lester Wilcox, proprietor of the Kozy Korner Restaurant at 138 Front St. The creek roared down Front St. and wreaked much havoc, spreading seven feet of water and grease from the french fryer through the restaurant.

The old Chemung still packed a wallop when it reached Tozer's Bridge along the Wilawana Road in Athens Township, Pa. The big span was broken up as if it was made of matchsticks.

Fordham Wood Jr. and Walter Chaykosky are living out of trailers while they work on their homes and properties near the bridge.

"Merlin Briggs' house went through my front yard," said Wood. "It took all the vegetation, went on down to hit those trees over there and disintegrated."

Chaykosky's 40-by-55-foot barn with antique buggies, electric riding tractors, wagon wheels and antiques floated far away and sits several hundred yards to the south.

Ralph Babcock of Tannery Curve at Athens was going to retire from Ingersoll-Rand in a couple of years, expanding his herd 19 cows and stick solely to farming. Only 58 now, Babcock figures he'd better hang on at I-R, where he's worked 33 years.

He got the cows and some hay out, but his house of 26 years is a shambles. They've purchased a new trailer, figuring the expense of rebuilding the old house would be more than it was worth.

The borough of Athens sustained considerable damage, like when Marie Horton of Pine St. watched a large refrigerator crash through the window at Jay's Furniture Store on Main St., opening the way for several davenports to neatly float single file out of the store and parade right down Main St. as if pulled by an invisible hand.

Fritz Whitmer is thanking his lucky stars for the National Guard, which got a boat to rescue him from the top of his tavern, Fritz and Nick's, at Tannery Curve.

"He was up there yelling on the roof," said Babcock. "I though the place was going to float out from under him. Smaller boats couldn't buck that current to get to him. But the Guard brought in a big boat to get him."

South on Rt. 220, Jack Bishop's fruit stand offers evidence that the Susquehanna River got in its licks at Ulster. The Chemung enters the southward-flowing Susquehanna near Greens Landing south of Athens.

The flood scattered Bishop's fruit all over the highway. And in cleaning up his business and home next door, Bishop injured a leg and was laid up for awhile.

The borough of Towanda also got some water damage, like at the Acme Market. But damage here was more from the water itself rather than the force of it.

The water of Towanda Creek made a forceful intrusion into the flatlands to the southeast of the borough, particularly along the Airport Road.

Much of farmer Gary Heath's 186 acres now contain 16 inches of mud. The young farmer figures maybe he's got 50 good acres left.

"We got 16 feet of water through here," said Heath. "The barn was covered. I got four of six heifers out of the hay mow. I had moved 46 head earlier up to a mountain pasture. My dad, John Heath, moved 68 head down the tracks to the Fox Chase Farm."

The Towanda Airport up the road from Heath had 19 private planes on the ground when the waters moved in. One was the $20,000 Cessna 180 of Martin Shaffer, proprietor of Shaffer's Feed Service in Monroeton.

"I put $5,000 into the engine of my plane last year," said Shaffer. "Now I've got to do it all over, take the wings apart and everything. When I opened the door I saw four inches of mud.

"But mine was the least hurt. My plane sits a little higher."

Shaffer estimated the loss at his business and home in Powell at $250,000. He said swirling waters from the Towanda and Schrader Creeks swept away a bin filled with 200 tons of corn.

"Some of my machinery is up around Towanda."

Battling Elmira's mud

How Much Damage? Try $750 Million

Tropical storm Agnes was probably responsible for around $750 million in damage to the Twin Tiers.

That figure—which covers seven New York State counties and three in Pennsylvania—is a "ballpark" estimate.

The actual loss may not be nailed down for months, if ever. Suffice to say that the Great Flood of 1972 was the most costly in this area's history.

There seems little doubt that Chemung County sustained the most dollar damage.

Federal officials estimate the county's loss at $291.2 million at this stage of the game.

Elmira officials, who haven't paused to take a solid reading on the cost of the city's devastation, peg it at $10 million but expect it to go much higher.

The New York Telephone Co. was hit hard with a $9 million loss, and St. Joseph's Hospital figures its cost at about $8 million. Other major damage estimates were $5.2 million for schools and $3.7 million for county-owned buildings.

The Village of Elmira Heights, which wasn't directly in the path of the rampaging Chemung River, counts its loss at $1.1 million—mostly from undermined roads.

And the Elmira Water Board figures it will spend $384,000 to restore its facilities.

Agriculture sustained a $3.2 million loss to crops and land, but that figure will change with the advent of the new growing season. By then, farmers will be able to tell whether the soil has recovered its fertility—if some of it ever does.

Steuben County, where the loss of life was the heaviest at 19, sustained considerable damage in the City of Corning.

Estimates there peg the business property loss at $26 million of an overall county figure of $190.1 million. The damage to the city's private housing will be staggering. Corning Glass Works hasn't figured its dollar loss yet, but its Painted Post neighbor, Ingersoll-Rand, puts its damage at $10 million. CGW's cost isn't likely to run less.

Corning Hospital suffered a $2.5 million loss, followed by the City of Hornell at $1.6 million and the Village of Painted Post at $1.3 million.

The remaining loss was spread throughout the county with some damage in almost every town. Canisteo alone listed $450,000.

Corning schools were hit about as hard as those in Elmira—$5 million worth. Addison schools estimate the loss at $300,000.

Steuben County roads were damaged extensively, and officials see that cost at about $15 million.

Just as in Chemung County, the Steuben County agricultural industry sustained heavy flood damage. Farm officials put it at $8.2 million.

Even Schuyler County, where the flooding wasn't as widespread, has damage listed at $7.2 million. Roads and bridges were hit hard with a $695,000 loss, but the major damage will be to homes.

Other New York State counties in the path of the flood have the following losses listed by federal officials:

Tioga—$5.1 million, including about $1 million in the Waverly area.

Yates—$11.9 million.

Tompkins—$4.8 million.

Allegany—$61.3 million.

Pennsylvania officials are still working on their estimates, but they have started with $70 million for publicly-owned property only. That doesn't cover business or private housing.

In fact, the borough of Athens alone estimates its loss at around $60 million in Bradford County. Athens Township figures its damage at around $500,000.

Towanda also was hurt considerably, as was the Monroeton-Powell area nearby.

In Tioga County, Blossburg has set its damage figure at $4 million, and there will be extensive losses in Lawrenceville and Tioga.

Damage in Chemung

Sandbaggers take a break

All of Lawrenceville Had to Be Evacuated

LAWRENCEVILLE — The Borough of Lawrenceville seemed to be the hardest hit of boroughs along the Tioga River — no building escaped structural or water damage.

In fact, more than 75 families applied for emergency housing.

Porches were torn away from some houses. One house buckled in the middle when its foundation collapsed. Motor homes and cars were tossed about like toys when tne Tioga and Cowanesque Rivers formed a dangerous combination near the borough.

The entire borough and nearby area was evacuated. During the height of the flood, water was eight feet high in the center of the borough. Nothing escaped water damage.

All persons evacuated were taken to Williamson High School at Tioga Junction and to other high ground areas. National Guard trucks and Civil Defense personnel were sent to the school along with Lawrenceville fire department crews to feed and clothe the stranded people.

When the flood began, Rt. 15 through the area was sealed off to unauthorized persons to prevent looting. One person surveyed the scene and said it looked like "madman on a bulldozer hit the town."

Windows were broken, houses had gaping holes through them, several homes collapsed, many houses were completely washed away.

Some houses looked as though a whirlpool had torn them apart. Personal belongings and furniture were tangled masses on lawns and in houses.

Firemen and Civil Defense personnel sealed off every street and highway within the borough and required special passes for travelers within the borough.

Firemen from Galeton, Wellsboro, Daggett, Millerton, Westfield, Osceola, Elkland, Morris and Clymer Township went to Lawrenceville with equipment, portable pumps and extra manpower to pump out borough stores and houses within a three-mile radius.

Galeton firemen sterilized a tank truck and brought in several loads of water. Food from the government and from area volunteers poured in to the homeless people. Cots were set up at the school and many people brought clothing for the evacuees.

Also in the area, Millerton was severely flooded, and portions of Westfield and Elkland received considerable flooding.

Businesses were also inundated by the flood. Gas stations were covered with silt and display cases in stores were tipped over in the flood. A supermarket and post office sustained water damage.

The water ran through the borough at a savage pace, judging by the way trees and debris were wrapped around buildings and utility poles. Tons of river bottom rocks were strewn across parking lots.

Chemung County bridge out

100 Blossburg Homes Hit

BLOSSBURG — More than 100 houses were damaged from the Tioga River's overflow in Blossburg — some seriously — and many borough residents had to be evacuated.

Business district damage was minor.

Mayor Francis Bionski declared an emergency when water invaded Riverside Park and it became apparent that low-lying homes would be threatened.

Police Chief John Davis began the evacuation about 5:30 p.m., directing rescue efforts by firemen and extra policemen who volunteered help.

The evacuees were taken to Blossburg State Hospital, St. Mary's parish hall and St. Andrews Church.

A curfew was set from 10 p.m. to 6 a.m., and travel within the borough was severely restricted.

The mayor, Civil Defense Director Harold Frank and councilmen toured the borough and found the Main St. bridge severely damaged. Part of Gulick St., a main route to Morris Run, was washed out along with the Erie Lackawanna bridge in the middle of the borough.

Some Valley Residents Refused to Leave

ATHENS — Mayor Theodore H. Fink has estimated Athens' damage as $60 million in the wake of the borough's worst disaster in history.

But money can never buy back what went before the flood. Only the determination exhibited by the Athens residents can do that.

On Thursday (June 22) the Athens police and firemen warned citizens of the possibility of the flood. Fire Chief George Whyte said many of the residents refused to evacuate.

Scores of men were sandbagging the dike along the west side of the borough, just west of Elmira St. The same process was being carried on along River St. adjacent to the Susquehanna.

But at 11:30 a.m. Friday the dike broke along Elmira St. in the Chestnut St. area, and the Pine St. dike caved in later that night.

The waters covered the business section of Athens up over the street signs in the downtown area. North along Main St. toward the Ingersoll-Rand plant, the water depth diminished to about four feet.

Throughout the day and night firemen in eight boats evacuated residents downtown. Launching boats near the I-R plant, they shot the rapids down through Main St.

Later the only fire — a smoke fire at the Tioga Point Hotel south of Athens — was put out.

Meanwhile, the Red Cross and volunteers were working to take care of the evacuees. Under the direction of Don Schrader and Executive Director Mrs. Margaret Peterson, the group set up 40 beds at the I-R employes club.

But June 23 brought more flood waters and caused the movement to the Audrielle Lynch School on higher ground.

On Monday volunteers from Syracuse joined in the operation, including Barney Koebbe, chief of operations from that point on.

Food, water, cots, bedding and other supplies were driven in from Syracuse to the school. Clothing and supplies came from all over the East — places like Buffalo and Reading, Pa.

Due to the crowding in the school some of the people were moved to the Carmelite Monastery on O'Brien's Hill.

The multi-purpose room of the school was set up as a cafeteria for the flood victims and workers. A television set, bringing news of the outside, was on constantly in the front.

Even a playroom was open for children.

At the first aid station registered nurses from the area ran a 24-hour service. Some of the nurses, it was reported, had worked 16-18 hours daily in the station.

Tetanus shots were being given throughout the day.

Outside the school a four-man National Guard force was keeping Rep. Joseph McDade informed of the events in Athens. The men, of the 305th Signal Company in Tobyhanna, Pa., were flown in by helicopter Thursday.

During the entire flood operation the Salvation Army Canteen Unit was dispensing food, drink and supplies to firemen, police and workers. Finally located at the formerly-engulfed Borough Hall, the unit was manned by volunteers working long hours throughout the crisis.

Part of Mayor Fink's $60 million estimate included the Athens - Sayre sewer plant on River St., inundated by four feet of flood water.

In Athens Township, Supervisor Everett Hubbard said the community would probably have to "scuttle" the summer highway program in lieu of flood repairs. The hardest hit portion of the Township was near Tozer's Bridge, almost completely broken up by flood waters. Across the bridge on the west side several homes were completely swept away in the raging flood.

Damage in Elmira

A child seeks security

One Story About a Hero

Dumped by water's whim

Many stories of heroism will be told about the flood.

This is one of them.

It's about a little green helicopter, a three-man crew and a guy from Big Flats.

Let's let the pilot, Maj. Edward F. Mye of the state national guard at Albany, tell it as he saw it:

"We were called from Albany and arrived here about 1:30 p.m. June 23. As we refueled we were told that there were immediate flood rescue projects awaiting us.

"We found a length of rope and tied a tire to it as a makeshift rescue apparatus. We didn't know the area so we asked for an observer.

"Roger (Roger Robinson of 41 Morrcrest Dr., East Corning) came aboard with us and we took off at about 1:55. We flew out over the river area and realized it was pretty bad.

"As we flew toward Corning we noticed five persons standing on a roof. We flew toward them but there were trees around the house and we couldn't get low enough to reach them with the tire.

"We decided to look for a boat and flew toward Big Flats. Soon we spotted a house with two persons on top of a lower roof. We descended but couldn't have reached the man on the lower roof without a prop strike (the propeller striking the upper roof.)."

"We again started toward Corning and noticed a single man. He, too, was on a lower roof and we couldn't get to him.

Finally we found a couple of Ducks (amphibious vehicles) with a trooper in charge. He said he would attempt to make the rescue of those on the roofs (all the rescues later were accomplished.)

"Next we spotted a man clinging to some debris that had lodged against a tree in the middle of the torrent. We descended and lowered the tire, figuring Roger and my crew chief (Sgt. Nicholas DeMaria) could haul him aboard.

"However, the man was so feeble, he couldn't get the tire around him. We hovered there for a few minutes and realized the situation was hopeless.

"In the meantime, Roger apparently made a personal assessment of the situation and decided to take action. He jumped about five feet into the water and swam to the man. But even he couldn't get the tire over the man's head. We later found out the guy weighed 245 pounds.

"The man had one arm hooked through the tire but I knew he was too weak to hold on and if I tried to haul him to land he'd fall off and drown for sure.

"At this time we noticed a rowboat up stream. We dropped the rope, went on up and signaled to the boat. We directed the boat to the two men and assumed they had been rescued. Then he flew to what I found out later was the Corning Town Hall and made sure the people on the roof would be rescued.

"By this time we were low on fuel and started back. I noticed something in the water and it turned out to be Roger waving a yellow slicker.

"When the boat had arrived, they found there was only room for one more man. So Roger told them to go ahead and he'd stay behind.

"We lowered the aircraft as far as we could and Roger pulled himself up onto the runner and into the aircraft."

Therein lies the tale of the rescue of 10 persons, and the especially heroic efforts of a Twin Tier man.

"I have recommended to Gen. (Howard) Garrison (commander of the area rescue operations) and his staff that Roger get some kind of special recognition. His heroic action probably saved a human life," said Maj Myer.

Mansfield Business Was Nearly Dry

MANSFIELD — Although a large number of homes in Mansfield were damaged by four to five feet of water, structural damage was not as serious as in other hard-hit flood areas.

A majority of businessmen escaped the muddy Tioga River water because the main business section of Mansfield is on relatively high ground.

However, the Super Duper market was considered a total loss after Corey Creek waters ran through the store.

Store officials said the loss in stock was estimated at $150,000 and damage to shelving, freezers and the structure another $250,000. Next door, a beauty parlor, state liquor store, shoe store and a discount store also were damaged.

A large piece of a tree crashed through one of the windows of the liquor store.

The Pennysaver, a weekly advertising publication was declared practically a total loss. Large rolls of newspaper were shoved out of the building during clean-up operations.

Wetherbee's Foodmart in Mansfield also reported water damage. There was damage to several motels and an auto dealership a few miles south of Mansfield on Rt. 15.

Also damaged in the flood were Modernage, a specialty store, a real estate office, dairy stores, florists, Arnot Building Supply and several other businesses.

The Miller Elementary School basement where the Southern Tioga School District offices are located received about five inches of water. Water also damaged the junior-senior high school building adjacent to the river on Rt. 6.

South of Mansfield on Rt. 14, all 30 mobile homes at Trask's Trailer Court were either destroyed or moved off foundations when the river dike across the road broke.

Evacuees stayed with friends and relatives or went to the Mansfield State College dormitories on higher ground.

National Guard trucks ferried the evacuees to safety. Mansfield churches and women's auxiliaries kept food coming and served hot coffee to the wet, cold volunteer workers.

Civil Defense Director Paul Bailey summed it up: "Total cooperation is why this whole thing succeeded and nobody was lost."

Trash litters E. Water St.

Sugar Creek Damaged Troy

TROY — Unofficial estimates of storm and flooding damage in the Troy area range from "several hundred thousand dollars" to "over half a million dollars".

One borough official said it will be some time before roads and bridges are repaired.

The most damage in the town occurred in houses and businesses along the branch of the Sugar Creek that runs one block east of the main road through town. Several automobile dealers, homeowners, mobile home owners, one furniture store and one paint store were hit hardest by the overflowing creek, and the fire department and sewer plant suffered heavy damage.

Canton suffered very little damage, and crews there concentrated pumping water from cellars. The major damage in the Canton area occurred in the Grover and Rallston areas, where high water flooded homes, fields and roads. The area did lose bridges and roads. The Canton Women's Auxiliary provided a canteen service for members of the Innes Hose Co., who worked on cleanup and pumping.

E. Water St. parking meter

Farms Destroyed, Possibly for Years

N. Main St., Elmira

Donald Bradley surveyed the gutted and scoured remains of his 100 acres of farmland on Lower Maple Ave.

Until the flood, Bradley Farms had what its proud owner described as the "finest land in New York State and in the country . . . gorgeous land."

But the flood has destroyed it — possibly for years.

Bradley estimated that the flood current swept away topsoil at an average depth of six inches and as much as three feet in areas near the river.

"The loss of the land is the greatest," he said during a truck tour of his property. "The erosion is tremendous. The flood couldn't have come at a worse time. We had recently planted and the fields had just been plowed."

The same is probably true of most other truck farms in the path of the flood although not all could be readily inspected.

The chief damage was to the land itself. "All that dust you see downtown was someone's farm once," Bradley said. "It could have come from as far away as Hornell or anywhere in between."

Destroyed at Bradley's by the flood were countless corn, melon, strawberry, pepper and onion plants. The corn, which had tasselled and would have been ready to pick soon, was standing over two feet. It was pressed into the mud left by the flood.

Strawberries, which were nearly ready to pick, were ripped out or compressed in their rows.

The vegetable crops were lost for the year. Bradley says he can't begin to pin a price tag on the loss. But it amounts to more than just a crop loss.

"The scope of recovery will depend on how much land can be salvaged," Bradley said. Besides the irreplaceable topsoil, the flood destroyed two of Bradley Farms' 24 greenhouses.

The farm usually employs about 20-25, Bradley said. But he had to cut it to two. In addition, the 8 college girls and women who worked in the roadside stand, and 10 high school boys who worked during the summer were not needed this year.

Luckily for Bradley, he divided his business between growing and selling vegetables and raising bed plants and vegetables in greenhouses. The bed plant business — which forms about 60 per cent of his operation in terms of dollars — was nearly over when the flood struck and consequently was affected only slightly.

With the loss of the year's vegetable crop and the probable loss of much of next year's at least, Bradley says the bed planting phase of business may become virtually his entire business.

He says he won't buy produce from wholesalers to sell at his stand because the reputation of Bradley Farms was built on what was grown there.

Another hard-hit vegetable grower., Albert Janowski & Sons at 517 Esty St., said his 20 acres of strawberries, lettuce, sweet corn, beets and green onions were covered by water which was 18 inches higher than the floodwaters in 1946.

"This flood was higher than the flood in 1946 but we didn't get the current we got in that one," he said. "People on our street when they returned to their houses were amazed. They expected to see their houses covered with water. But we didn't get more than 6 to 36 inches of water on first floors in this area.

Janowski says even though the year's crop is destroyed he'll be back in business next year.

"Why the hell not. We did it in '46 and we'll do it again. Life is just getting knocked on your rear end and having to get up and do it again. But I'm not going to do anything until I get calmed down."

Corning Was a Disaster

CORNING — The Crystal City was a disaster but that doesn't describe it right. The word to describe the ravaged city hasn't been invented.

Corning was a feeling that came with seeing the wreckage piled against fences, hanging from trees and utility poles and half submerged in remaining flood waters still there. The sick feeling when you saw a new car tipped against a tree or overturned in a mud-coated yard.

But the worst feeling came from watching people. Dazed and weary, they could be seen moving in and out of the houses or walking away with one small article that may have escaped the water.

"If we had really known that it was coming, we could have hauled so much stuff upstairs," one man said.

James Falk of Bonady Gardens Apartments, 104 W. Pulteney St. was one of those who didn't evacuate. "We had a second floor apartment but we got together with some people living on the third floor and kind of all pitched in," he said.

The water never reached the third floor. But the water was high enough to ruin most homes on the Northside.

Farther along the street, Mrs. James Nelson picked her way through the mud to her home. "We're lucky we live upstairs," she said, "and to be alive."

Clinton St. and College Ave., Elmira

Along River St. and Hillview Ave., the destruction was more complete because of the closeness of the river. Everett Begell of 146 Hillview Ave. talked about the new TV and the extensive remodeling job lost when his home shifted off its foundation as second story-high water poured over the levee.

Leo Campbell of 272 W. William St. found his first floor coated with mud but his alarm seemed more than offset when he discovered his cat still alive on the second floor.

The Keenan Drug Store at Bridge and Pulteney Sts. was a shambles. The front windows were gone and merchandise was strewn among tipped shelves inside.

National Guardsmen from Cortland patrolled the business sections keeping looters and spectators out. Loblaws Shopping Plaza was emptied and food cases were protruding through the front windows. The nearby Northside Pharmacy was ruined.

The Houghton Plot across from the Corning Glass Center resembled a war zone with the Army Reserve and National Guard trucks moving to and from Centerway Bridge.

Richard Gottko of 179 North Place found his neighbor's garage dumped in his back yard and a missing tree. "My God, I wanted to get rid of that tree but the flood did it for me, roots and all," he said.

Yet, Gottko said he was luckier then most. "My house is still where I left it."

Every stationary object was coated with paper, grass and debris. Streets were heaved and in some spots, still coated with water last Saturday. Amphibious vehicles from places like Owasco, N.Y., and Aurora, N.Y., transported families and police through the streets.

Riverside was unrecognizable, McDonald's was smashed and the Knights of Columbus building and former Kings Dairy Bar were simply gone. Rt. 17 west of Corning was clear until you hit the traffic circle at Painted Post. Then it became part of a lake.

Mrs. Ellen Purcell Carver of E. Fifth St. Corning walked from her home to Keefe Blvd. in Painted Post to check on her brother. Normally a five-minute ride, it took Mrs. Carver three hours.

Corning's Southside seemed less affected than the north but the difference wasn't much. Tioga Ave. seemed more like a gravel road than paved because of huge deposits of mud. Lumber from Corning Building Co. lined the street.

Corning was much like a city that survived a war. Rifle carrying guardsmen added to the effect. Refugees were no better off than if a bomb had scored a direct hit on their homes and businesses.

Most people were so dazed they didn't seem concerned about reports that 18 had died in the flood. "I wouldn't be surprised," they said.

Work of recovery

Evacuation: You Don't Think Clearly

An Elmira scene

Evacuation.

Sounds simple enough after the ordeal.

At 4:30 in the mrning it is a little difficult to think — as many now know.

This is a quick recollection of the beginning of that long day:

What to wear . . . comfortable clothes . . . very casual . . . very unmatched! And sneakers in case you have to walk through water. They would be easy to dry. Quick splash of water on the face, quick combing of hair.

Alert the lady upstairs.

Never thought we would be gone more than half a day. The flood wouldn't hit Chemung Place . . . it hasn't since the late 1800s. It wouldn't now.

What do you take with you?

Some government bonds that had not been taken to the safe deposit box were picked up; some extra change ready to go to the savings bank; a portable radio; umbrella and clothes on our backs.

Propped open a door to the second floor so the two feline pets could get to higher ground, if necessary. But we know Chemung Place won't flood.

Took tenant to a niece on the Southside. Our closest family and work were on the Northside. Had to get over the bridge. Told not to, but no one stopped us from crossing the Lake St. Bridge. Thrill. Fright. It felt as though we were driving right in the water.

This "old river watcher" since 1931 never saw such a torrent of water . . . only an inch or so of concrete dike was showing above the rampaging waters. What a sight. It gave you a stomach sensation — like looking down from great heights.

It was for real. Heading toward safety and warmth with relatives on Welles St. it hit. Tough to fight back exhaustion and tears.

What has happened to 109?

Tried to sleep. Couldn't. Listened to radio. People evacuated to Southside High School were being moved farther south. Water up to South Ave. What about 109?

What about the cats?

What do you think about?

Garbage cans floating, porch and lawn furniture leaving the property, the new slacks my husband had never worn, cleaning up (where do you start?), the strong box with important papers, insurance policies, INSURANCE!

What about 109?

Your life has revolved around Chemung Place since 1931. The house should stand the onslaught. Did the cats get to the second floor, were they able to stay above the water?

Could cry. Don't. Can't relax.

What is floating around the house . . . the cleanup . . . the cats . . . starting over.

Tried not to think too much about the disaster. Husband tried to keep it that way, too, with such remarks as:

"Bet you never thought of those 20-some books of trading stamps?"

An avid trading stamp saver would only know how that could hurt.

Hadn't thought of them. Bound volumes of Shakespeare, yes! Not stamps. That's materialistic. So is the house and all the love it has known. We are safe. That's fine. Better off than many people!

But what about 109? That's important, too!

The aftermath could have been worse — or so it seems.

The cats?

They were safe. They scurried up to the second floor before the flood waters approached the first floor ceiling and waited there patiently until someone came to exclaim over them, cuddle them and feed them.

What about 109?

It took in 7½ feet of water. Need you know more?

Yet it could have been more serious structurally, for the house survived.

It will be rebuilt and remodeled. And that's a plus.

Schuyler's Role Was Support, Aid

WATKINS GLEN — Agnes visit to Schuyler County left over $1 million in property damage.

By itself, that's quite a news item. But compared to surrounding counties, it was a drop in the bucket. Irving A. Davis who operates an official U.S. Weather Bureau gauge at Hector, said 9.83 inches of rain fell June 21-23. Normally, Davis said, 3.5 inches is the average for the month.

Schuyler's role in the '72 flood was one of support and aid to flood vicitms, the majority of whom came from Corning. Although the county escaped "major" damage, the volunteer labor was worth billions.

The county's road system suffered the worst damage. County Highway Supt. Paul B. Beebe, estimates that it will take $305,000 to repair town roads and bridges and another $390,000 for county roads and bridges.

Farmlands took a beating in Schuyler to the tune of $674,000, said James T. Stevens, county executive director of the Agriculture Stabilization and Conservation Committee. A tour by the ASCS disaster committee revealed $435,000 lost in crops such as corn, wheat, hay and cropland pasture.

Erosion caused another $80,000 loss to croplands through scouring and washing. Wind damage to the county's vast vineyards amounted to $156,000. Equipment loss was only $2,000 in the form of motors and parts and $750 in fencing was lost. On the plus side, no livestock, buildings, equipment and milk were lost, he said.

Sewage treatment plants proved to be the most costly loss to Schuyler's two biggest villages. Montour Falls Mayor Anthony Pulos estimates it will cost $62,800 to repair the newly renovated Falls facility. However, the plant remained fully operational.

"It would have been a lot worse if firemen and other volunteers hadn't put in long hours attempting to keep the plant pumped out," Pulos said.

The village's reservoir was full of debris and unusable, Pulos said, and he estimated it would take $70,000 to clean it out. Ironically, the village maintained drinkable water service throughout the flood by pumping from a well dug with federal funds received after the July, 1970 flood.

The village-owned Hayes Hill Road was heavily damaged by rushing water and will require about $5,000 in repairs, the mayor said. Other street damage was slight, he added.

Watkins Glen Mayor Joseph J. Fraboni estimates it will take about $50,000 to repair the village's sewage treatment plant located at the south end of Seneca Lake.

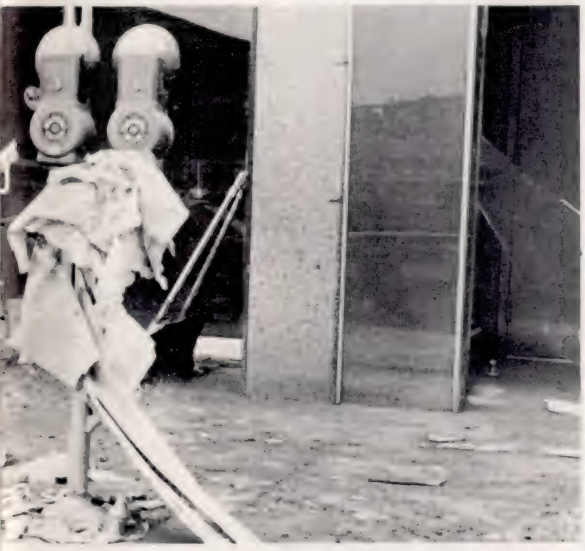
Major damage was in evidence at Barnard's, a trailer camp on Lamoka Lake near Tyrone. Tyrone Creek which enters the lake at the camp was clogged with debris near its mouth. As a result, water was diverted through the camp, heavily damaging several camps and undermining others.

Homes and cottages on nearby Weller's Island were damaged by high water ranging up to two feet. Unlike Seneca, Lamoka receded to a livable level.

Tiny Schuyler Hospital at Montour Falls, in the midst of "winding down" for the move to its new facility on West Hill, suddenly found itself inundated with patients from the Corning area. With the help of volunteers locally and professional help from Corning and points north, the hospital rose to the challenge under the direction of Dr. James J. Norton.

Local industry was not seriously affected by high water. International Salt Co. at Watkins, lost some production when pumphouses drawing water from Seneca Lake became flooded. But the loss was small, said James A. Luce, engineering and general maintenance foreman.

There was no interruption of production at the Watkins Salt Co., said Franklin P. Hinman, executive vice president. That company "sandbagged" pumphouses and suffered no damage, he said. During the peak of the flood, the company was unable to ship salt but the Penn Central Railroad later resumed shipments.



Water in Elmira street

Victims of the flood

Unpredictable Agnes Followed the Front

Directing Elmira traffic

Long before anybody knew that Storm Agnes was going to squat and stall over the Twin Tiers, she had set the stage for the disastrous, record floods that left many communities in ruins.

By the morning of Friday, June 23, when the flood crest and the center of the storm arrived in Elmira simultaneously, the really damaging downpours had been over for a day, and two days in some areas.

For as a weakening Agnes lurched across Georgia, early Tuesday, June 20, she was preceded by hundreds of miles by a broad band of heavy rainfall.

By the time the storm picked up new strength and moisture off the Virginia capes early Wednesday, then perplexed the forecasters by veering inland, the upper Pennsylvania and Southern Tier watershed areas had been taking a beating for hours.

It was the intense rains of these early hours that made the floods inevitable when the storm later shifted its course and moved directly into this area.

Dr. A. Boyd Pack, climatologist for the National Weather Service, based at Ithaca, said precipitation reports from all over the state showed figures like these for the four-day period ending Friday morning.

At Hornell, on the Canisteo River, a major tributary of the Chemung, 11.1 inches of rain were recorded, with an incredible 4.9 inches of it falling in a 24-hour period that ended Wednesday June 21.

"That's when they got the wallop," said Pack.

Wellsville, in an area that drains into the Genesee River, recorded the highest amount, 13 inches in the four days. Nearby Alfred got 12.9 inches, with 5.8 inches of it coming in the first 24 hours. Bolivar got 11.1 inches, with 6 inches in the first day. Haskinville got 10.6 inches, including 4.5 inches in the initial period. Prattsburg got 3.1 inches the first day, but then got 3.7 inches the second.

Other totals for the four days were 9.5 inches in the Angelica-Geneseo area, 9.9 inches at Scio, 7.5 inches at Dansville, 9.5 inches at Whitesville, 6.93 inches at Ithaca, 9.58 inches at Bath. Nearby Bradford got 9.6 inches, with the biggest splash, 4.7 inches, coming in the 24 hours ending at 7 a.m. on Thursday, June 22.

Binghamton, which got 5.11 inches in all, showed the pattern that pervaded the region, with 2.87 inches for the 24 hours ending Wednesday the 21st, 1.47 inches in the next 24 hours, then .77 inches and finally, .04 inches.

Elmira had 6.3 inches as of 10 p.m. Thursday night, when the gauge went under water. Pack estimates Elmira had about 8 inches.

The swollen Chemung feeds into the Susquehanna at Waverly, and the upstream floods, plus the fact that a stalled Agnes poured 13.4 inches on Sunbury and 13.5 inches on Williamsport, farther down the Susquehanna, led to severe flood damages in many Pennsylvania communities.

Dike Saved Battered Tioga

TIOGA — Nearly every building in the borough of Tioga sustained some form of water damage when the flooding Tioga River surged over its dike.

More than 700 borough residents fled the flood waters, with most of them taking refuge in a cemetery on high ground above the borough.

Those who went to the cemetery found shelter in their own automobiles, in nearby buildings and under tarpaulins.

Borough residents began filtering back to their homes on June 23 only to find cellars filled with water. In addition, the borough water supply was cut off.

Rt. 287, toward Wellsboro was the only escape route from the borough, Leigh Sweeley said. He said some people stayed in town — those who were bedridden patients were taken to the Epsicopal Church parish house. Sweeley said he stood on the river dike on the night of June 22 and watched the river rise four inches in one hour.

The borough's 750,000-gallon reservoir was used on a restricted basis, Sweeley said. The water supply was located on Park Hill. When the Park Hill bridge lost one of its two spans, the water supply link with the borough was cut off.

Despite reports of some minor looting, Sweeley said "Everybody was a friend during this episode. People tried to help their neighbors and even people they didn't know very well.

"Farmers who couldn't get their milk to market were donating it to anybody who wanted some. It was either that or throw it away," Sweeley said.

Somewhere down the Tioga River was the borough landfill and its access road. Both were washed away in the flooding. Sweeley, a Borough Council member and a local fireman, said the borough made sure everyone had food and shelter.

Wellsboro Was Lucky — Its Dams Worked

WELLSBORO — Residents in the Wellsboro region will never believe what happened to their neighbors in the Tioga River valley unless they see it for themselves.

The reason is that the borough and surrounding area escaped untouched by the flooding and destruction that ravaged towns and villages less than 20 miles to the east.

Donald Lindsay, U. S. Soil Conservation Service District Conservationist, said, "There's no question that the three water impoundments saved Wellsboro from a major disaster."

Lindsay estimated that the dams held back nearly 680-million gallons of water at the height of the storm.

"The flood gates are designed to allow only the amount of water which can be held within existing stream banks below the dams. If the spillways started the creeks below would have surely overflowed and caused flooding," Lindsay said.

But the spillways did not activate. Hamilton Dam, about one-mile east of town which controls Charleston Creek, came closest. Waters rose less than two-feet from the spillways.

The Nessmuk Dam across Morris Creek held water to three feet below the spillway and the Kennedy Dam across Kelsey Creek held flood water to within five feet of the crest.

The lakes which form behind the dams grew tremendously.

Hamilton's surface area more than doubled from 40 to 90-acres and temporarily blocked Roundtop Road which crosses Charleston Creek almost two miles upstream of the dam.

Nessmuk Lake went from 60 to 70-acres nearly backing into a recreation area on the south end of the lake.

Kennedy Lake, the smallest of the three, blossomed into about 25-acres from its normal 6-acre pool.

The three dam project cost $1.4-million.

. . . With Tears in Her Eyes

Refine all the anguish of Elmira, where the Chemung River ruined two-thirds of its ancient valley, and it all comes down to a woman with tears in her eyes.

While industry and business tried to add up the awful thing that has been done to them by the worst flood in the city's history, Mrs. Irene Treadeau sat in the back seat of a taxicab and didn't try to stop the tears welling up.

She lived on the Southside, which looks like a village in western France after the Panzer invasion.

She ran a candy store on a most prominent intersection in town, next door to the venerable Mark Twain Hotel.

"I stayed up Wednesday night listening to the radio," she was saying, "and then I heard them talking about evacuating the Southside and I thought about my mother, who is old.

That's when the tears came up.

"She lost everything at her house and nothing ever is going to be the same again. I ran out of the house and then I thought about my cats, and I just threw cat food around. They were terrified, but there wasn't anything I could do about them.

"I couldn't comfort them, I couldn't take them with me, so all I thought of doing was to throw food around. Then I wondered what I would take before the bus came to pick me up and I took a box of tissues. Isn't that ridiculous?

"I didn't take clothes, I didn't take anything but that silly box. When I got to the Southside school, where they started to say it was going to be flooded out, too, there were men and women and crying babies all over, and it was the most awful night of my life.

"I kept thinking about the store, but there was no way of getting there (she didn't get there until Monday) and it wasn't until much later that I finally was able to call my friend who drives the cab and somehow he got across the only bridge in town to get me out.

"What I found was that the looters didn't even spare my poor candy boxes. The glass in the front door had been broken, and they went in and they simply carried everything off they could get their hands on. When I finally was able to get hold of my boss in New Jersey to tell him happened, he said he hoped the candy made them sick.

"Isn't it awful how there are still people in the world who will take advantage of other people's troubles? It is sickening."

The cab moved slowly out to the Chemung County Airport, and she stared out the window, unseeing until she realized the sun was beginning to break through the clouds after five most terrifying days in her life and in the life of her city.

"The sun," she said, "is even shining on those thieves."

Temporary repair, Elmira

The Many Faces Of The Great Flood

Salvage workers, Elmira

GANG MILLS—Nobody was altogether sure at Beilby's Funeral Home in nearby Corning when Brian Tong's body would be driven to Traub's Crematorium north of Syracuse. His parents want his ashes, eventually.

What happens to Brian, who was 9 months and 15 days old when he died the morning of June 23, is one of the tiny heartbreaking details to be disposed of in the chaotic Southern Tier of New York where the havoc of tropical storm Agnes has left hundreds of square miles upstate in a numbing shambles.

Nine days ago, Brian's 24-inch form was laid out on a plywood bier outside Beilby's where the state police had set up a makeshift morgue, and fingerprinted him. There were 16 other bodies besides Brian's. The lives all had been taken by the Conhocton, Canisteo and Tioga Rivers. These three rivers meet in violent collision here to create the Chemung River in the Gang-Mills Corning minimegalopolis where the new suburban homes crowd the banks of the streams.

To find the shattering experiences brought on by the worst floods in history here, you have to walk up to the mildewed bemired new home of Stephen Tong, a 32-year-old Corning Glass chemist from Shanghai.

What had happened in the predawn hours of June 23 was that Kathy Tong, alone in her home with two small children because her husband was in Los Angeles, had been warned by radio bulletins and neighbors' telephone calls that the area was in danger of being overrun by flood waters.

As she looked up wearily from her knees while she tried to scour mud from her kitchen, Mrs. Tong said without visible emotion that she had carried Brian and his older sister Angela to the house next door. "Because," she said tonelessly, "it has a second floor."

The muddy waters were rising, there were fear and dread because of, among other things, the absence of light. Mrs. Tong remembered she had a flashlight back at her house. She handed Brian to a Mrs. Papapapanu, a neighbor. Moments later, the lawn and foundation of the Papapapanu home collapsed and the woman, holding Brian, fell into the water-filled cellar of her home.

When Mrs. Tong returned, in seconds with the flashlight, the baby was lost. Mrs. Papapapanu, from whose arms Brian had been pulled by the savage suction of the flood waters, survived.

Six days later, John Kuehnle, the fire chief of Gang Mills, who had had only a few hours sleep during 144 hours, said in flat accents, "Frank Brady, a Conservation Department man, found the baby after daylight, in the cellar. He said he saw a little hand sticking out of the water. At first he thought it was a doll."

Up and down these river and creek valleys, from Hammondsport on the north and Salamanca on the west and Athens, Pa., on the south and Owego on the west, this kind of violence wracked thousands of families. Nineteen thousand families were displaced from homes which suffered on a scale reading from total destruction to minor damage.

Amory Houghton Sr., the senior member of the famous Corning Glass family who was president Eisenhower's ambassador to France in the late 1950s, looked down from his 'Knoll' home high above the flood waters, contemplated the near decimation of his industry and hurried in his car down the hill to look after things personally to create order out of unbelievable disorder.

At the same time, his son Amory Jr.'s first thought was of employes who had been wounded by the flood and he, before even going to work on the physical plant, ordered $1,000 loans — interest free — to anyone who needs money, with no thought of repayment until at least 1973.

A few blocks from the big glass works, John Root and his wife sat on a slimy porch with Mrs. Root's sister, Mrs. Isabelle Watson, and glumly viewed the carnage about them.

"The water came over the dike, man. The people didn't get enough warning."

Mrs. Watson, her face lined and her eyes watering, said, "I cried when I saw people sliding under. There were waves of people making for Denmark Hill (a local landmark of high ground). They tried to run for the hill and never made it. There were great big rolls of water. You could hear it. That's when I cried."

Some businesses may have been ruined for all time. Standing in the soggy lobby of the new addition to the Marine Midland Bank in Elmira, Carl Beery, its president, said somberly, "I have heard of some older businessmen who don't have young men in their organizations wondering out loud whether it was worth starting all over again, after one, two, three floods. I think, however, when things begin to clear up, everybody will come back."

Like every conversation in this bewildered area, it stopped right there as worried-appearing colleagues came to Beery to talk to him about getting the commercial life of the city flowing again while water still

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The Many Faces...

(Continued from Page 56)

was flowing down the street outside.

The cities of Elmira and Corning were under the security wing of the National Guard, Gen. William Garrison of Johnson City, an IBM executive, commanding. The federal government had moved into the area in impressive numbers and with intense showings of strength, cutting red tape, telling people by any means of communication where and how to get relief in a form of housing, food, money.

The words of Vice President Spiro T. Agnew on June 29 were reassuring to many. He said red tape had to be cut through, and he was in a serious, non-alliterative, nonpolitical mood. The heads of the federal agencies who had come to take over the rescue mission were on a businesslike, non-nonsense basis. Many of them will remain here for months.

Perhaps the best example of this mood was demonstrated by Maj. Donald Anselm of the U.S. Corps of Army Engineers, a slim athletic officer, who, upon arrival in Elmira, began to hire contractors with just a word and a nod of the head. There were no red tape forms, no negotiations other than "Do it."

He started to get done the job of shoring up crumbling bridges, replacing some, making plans to clear streets and highways of debris, helping the utility companies to put back power and communications. He sent teams of captains out into the countryside to assess damage, to find out what had to be done away from the cities, which were not the only places crippled.

Major Anselm said, "These contracts are being negotiated in an atmosphere of mutual trust confidence and a desire to bring the area back to normal." After all local contracting resources had been absorbed, the contractors from other parts of the Northeast began to move into the region.

Playing a counterpoint to this self confidence being exuded by federal authorities, from housing experts to IRS agents moving out against price gougers, were the compassion of the people themselves, victims and non-victims alike, and their devotion to duty.

The private people of the flood-torn towns were examples of fortitude. It is difficult to find any tear-stained woman who doesn't say, "We were lucky. At least we're all alive." Their attitudes were summed up by Mrs. Robert Adams of Gang Mills, whose home was devastated. Brian Tong died about 100 yards from her home.

"We're here," she said. "That's what counts. I love this old house and I love it even more now. Our house is where our love is."

Mrs. Adams turned back into the ruin of her house and — as they all say here to people whose houses are untouched by disaster — "Lots of luck. Have a good day." Adversity breeds calm, strong women.

Rural Residents Had Problems, Too

Life in the "hills" surrounding flood-devastated portions of Chemung County wasn't as pleasant and trouble-free as some flood victims may think.

Many rural dwellers fought losing battles with water problems caused by surface drainage and overflowing streams plus numerous extended electrical power failures.

After the first Elmira residents were evacuated from the Robinson St. area at 8 p.m. June 22, at least four power failures hit the hill areas east of the city.

Without power for periods up to 24 hours, residents of many low-lying rural homes had to watch their basements fill up with water, In addition, freezers were not operating and kids had a carnival time eating ice cream before it melted.

Some farmers with bulk tanks had to dispose of milk before it soured after power was off for a 24 hour period.

Also, without electricity, the rural resident on a private water system did not have any way to run his water pump.

Because of the large runoff of surface water, those residents had to boil their water before drinking or washing dishes.

Rural stores did a land office type of business when the flood waters hit Elmira.

Mrs. Michael Bilynsky, who with her husband operates a country store on the backside of Jerusalem Hill, said "business hasn't been this good in 25 years."

It was a similar situation at Eben Elston's store in North Chemung. There, bread, candles, fresh milk and eggs were hard to find.

Part of the reason for the big demand for foodstuffs was that a number of Elmira residents who were evacuated had moved in with relatives, increasing the Town of Baldwin's population.

Scene in Elmira

The Flood That Couldn't Happen

Out of service, Elmira

This was the flood that nobody thought could happen.

Nobody, that is , except the experts who had taken a close look at the history and geography of the region and who knew the susceptibility of its lazy creeks and rivers to sudden downpours that could turn them into raging, destructive torrents.

A complacent public, thinking itself protected because of levees and other flood control works built after the famous "hundred year flood" of 1946, ignored the warnings that a worse flood might be yet to come.

Interest at the state level, boosted in the late 1960's after severe droughts put new emphasis on management of all water resources, petered out in recent years.

In Washington, where the vast sums needed for effective flood control projects must be found, there were too many other needs to be met and too little grassroots pressure for the needed flood control dams for Twin Tiers area to progress at anything but a snail's pace.

One legacy of the flood may be a new push at the state level for better management of the state's water resources, including more emphasis on flood control.

Yet the Washington situation remains unchanged, and the effect of the state activity is uncertain.

As a result, two key dams authorized by Congress in 1958— the Tioga-Hammond dam complex, and the Cowanesque dam, both just inside Pennsylvania tributaries of the Chemung River—exist only on the drawing boards. Some funds have been appropriated for land acquisition for the Tioga-Hammond complex, a pair of dams on adjacent streams, but this is only about 15 per cent complete, according to the Alfred Robinson, assistant chief of the planning division of the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers, Baltimore District.

Whether these dams, had they been completed before Tropical Storm Agnes wended her malicious way into southwestern New York, would have prevented the devastation at Painted Post, Big Flats, Corning, Elmira and other population centers is impossible to determine at this point. Complex engineering studies will have to be done to determine that. But the dams obviously would have reduced the flow and the destruction substantially.

Another dam, on Mud Creek near Savona, has long been in the proposal stage, but has not yet been authorized.

Flood plain management, long a key proposal of experts in the field, had gotten nowhere in the area, which is characterized by steep, glacier-scoured hills with flats, flood-plain valleys in between, where roads, rivers and railroads run and people have built their settlements. Flood plain zoning, a key tool of flood plain management, involves restricting new residential construction in low-lying areas subject to flooding, and gradually getting existing housing out of those areas. It is a concept that local governments have been reluctant to embrace.

The flood warning system, such as it was, was pegged to the National Weather Service station in Harrisburg, Pa., where water level reports from upland tributaries were to be fed into a computor that would predict when and how high the downward flow would crest.

With a few exceptions, there was no plan to mobilize manpower to fight a flood with sandbags if it threatened to overtop the levees.

This, then, was the situation that existed when Agnes began dumping record rains on the already nearly saturated Susquehanna watershed, of which the Chemung drainage basin is a part.

What happened then is history, written in death, suffering, destruction of property and at enormous public and private expense.

A combination of circumstances, so rare as to seem only theoretically possible, brought disaster.

There was water far beyond anything the flood control works in existence were designed to stop.

At Elmira, the record flood of 1946 sent 115,000 cubic feet of water per second cascading down the Chemung River, and 109,000 cubic feet per second upriver at Corning.

A flow that vast, the Corps of Engineers said in a Chemung River Basin Flood Information report completed last year, is so rare as to be statistically almost insignificant. At the Village of Chemung, downriver from Elmira, the maximum discharge was 133,000 cubic feet per second—something one would expect only once in 770 years, the Corps said. In other words, the 1946 flood was viewed as something closer to a 1,000-year flood, rather than a 100-year flood.

But that was a relative trickle compared to this one.

The Corps of Engineers' Robinson said preliminary indications are that the flow at Elmira was between 200,000 and 300,000 cubic feet per second at the height of the flood—roughly twice the volume of water as the 1946 disaster.

A 1956 report to Congress by the Corps of Engineers, which was seeking approval then

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It Couldn't Happen

(Continued from Page 58)

for the Tioga-Hammond and Cowanesque dams, said that the 1946 flood crested at 20.5 feet at Elmira. The Almond reservoir, finished in 1949, would have lowered the 1946 crest by three-tenths of a foot, about four inches. But had the Tioga-Hammond and Cowanesque dams been in existence then, they would have reduced the maximum water level at Elmira to 14 feet, well within the levees, averting virtually all damage.

In other words, the dams would have lowered the crest at Elmira by just over six feet, at Corning, by eight feet. The Elmira levees, designed and partly built before World War II and finished after the 1946 flood, had been redesigned to add 18 inches or so. Presumably they could handle a 1946-size flood crest with a foot and a half to spare.

But 1972 was something else.

The Corps of Engineers never builds to cope with the maximum conceivable floods, for that would be so rare that costs would far outweigh the annual benefits, skewing the "benefit-cost" ratio so that the project would never get funded.

Instead, the engineers build levees or dams sufficient to handle flows somewhat greater than anything that has actually occurred. That is the margin of protection which the Tioga-Hammond and Cowanesque dams would have provided.

It's hard to justify building for very rare storms," said Robinson, adding that the Corps would review its figures and plans in light of Agnes. "We always are perplexed on this situation when we're trying to decide how high to build (the levees)."

But the Corps also calculates what sort of flood is theoretically possible, if the worst rainstorms ever recorded in a similar area occurred at the worst possible moment over the drainage area in question.

In its 1956 report to Congress it noted that the Chemung drains an area of 2,160 square miles above Elmira, and that the "standard project storm" for this worst-of-the worst calculation would have dumped 7.3 inches of rain in a 48-hour period.

Something approximating that apparently is what actually happened, thanks to Agnes.

A 7.3-inch, 48-hour deluge would send water cascading past Elmira at 264,000 cubic feet per second, the report predicted.

If the proposed Tioga-Hammond and Cowanesque reservoirs were built, the maximum flow would be reduced to 190,000 cubic feet per second—still half again as great as the 1946 flood.

It's possible that if Tioga-Hammond had been in place, it could have relieved the pressure enough so that local protection works might have saved Elmira and Corning," commented Francis Montanari, former state assistant commissioner of Environmental Conservation and director of Water Resources, a long-time champion of flood control programs. His job was abolished in the budget cuts of 1971 and he is now Denver regional manager for a private engineering consulting firm.

The Tioga, one of the Chemung's main tributaries, rises in the hills of Pennsylvania, southwest of the Elmira area. The plans call for a dam about 18 miles south of Lawrenceville, plus a related one at nearby Hammond on Crooked Creek, joined by a channel and with a single outlet.

The Cowanesque dam would block the Cowanesque River just south of Lawrenceville, where it joins the Tioga.

Tioga-Hammond, estimated in 1956 at $55 million, now is expected to cost $97 million, with a completion date sometime in 1977.

Cowanesque, originally figured at just under $30 million, is projected at $51 million, with a 1980 completion date.

The Tioga flows north over the border, joined by the Canisteo (which the Arkport and Almond dams help curb) and then, at Painted Post, by the Conhocton forming the Chemung.

These areas, south and west of Elmira, got some of the heaviest rainfall— up to 13 inches in four days, in a few places — in the recent storm. Had the storm veered to the east, instead of west, Binghamton might have been in Elmira's straits.

State and Federal engineers have been prodding a long time for more flood protection in the Corning-Elmira area, primarily the construction of the Tioga-Hammond and Cowanesque dams, which between them would control 699 square miles of drainage area, about a third of the drainage area above Elmira.

But complacency had set in after completion of various flood works in the wake of the 1946 flood. Unlike many states which have had to face water management problems more directly—either because of water shortages or repeated floods—New York has never been a very effective seeker after federal dam-building money.

"We're in the Class D League," remarked Frank S. Davenport, the Ithaca-based engineer with the Department of Environmental Conservation's water management unit, and the consulting engineer for five regional water resources board, including the Chemung Basin Board.

Elmira flood scene

The Bradford Scene: 11,000 Evacuated

A car stalled in Elmira

TOWANDA — Bradford County's worst flood in 280 years that records have been kept is now hisotry, but it will be many months before things are back to normal.

Wesley Perry of Towanda, county Civilian Defense director, says 11,000 persons were displaced by the disastrous flooding of June 21-23 and many have no homes to return to.

Total loss in the county, including damage to highways and bridges is estimated at $12 million, and Perry says "that is very conservative." He said loss to individual home owners will total "at least $2½ million, probably more."

The Susquehanna river at Towanda crested Saturday morning, June 24 at 33.25 feet. In the great flood of 1936 the water reached 25.02 feet — the record high up to the present.

Damage was high in 1936, but as one flood victim remarked, "That flood of 1936 was just a Sunday School picnic compared to this one."

Valuable homes in Towanda along River St. were flooded for the first time ever; there was heavy damage in the Presbyterian, Methodist and Episcopal Churches, and surface water and sewers backing up flooded cellars throughout the business section.

The large trestle of Towanda Coal Co. collapsed, and only the roof of the office building was above water. Two floors of an apartment building near it were flooded.

The old borough hall, used as police headquarters, was surrounded by water for two days. Offices of the AAA Motor Club, Finlan Insurance, and Mayor Gene McCracken had to be abandoned.

The Acme Supermarket stood in the middle of a "lake" for three days.

The 1936 flood waters reached the railroad tracks east of the market but have never been that high since then.

Greatest damage in the county was in Athens, where the business district was under 14 feet of water.

Everyone in the borough of Monroeton, four miles south of Towanda, was evacuated along with 150 people from the village of Powell. Scores of Towanda people opened their homes to the flood victims.

At Wyalusing the Honchell store was wrecked and deep water covered the Welles Milling Co. property and the Edgefield Court Motel.

In North Towanda Sugar Creek and the Susquehanna River combined to cover U.S. Rts. 6 and 220, and at the height of the disaster the important James St. bridge crashed into the river. This made it difficult for people in northeastern Bradford County to reach the county seat.

Estimates run up to $1 million to replace this bridge.

In Troy and Canton damage was confined for the most part to highways and bridges.

Of the county's 55,000 residents more than 25,000 are affiliated in some manner with the Civil Defense setup. All were on duty for days without sleep along with hundreds of volunteers who helped evacuate flood victims and relieve suffering.

Rep. Joseph McDade was in constant touch with the situation from the first. Vast quantities of food, clothing and bedding have been shipped to Towanda by helicopter and later by truck-trailer for distribution.

To speed help McDade had an army wireless station set up in the home of Wesley Perry and other stations in his offices at Scranton and Washington, D.C.

McDade peersonally visited the county three times by helicopter to help determine needs and set up federal offices to handle the work rapidly.

Assistance came from all over the United States.

Some trailer-trucks arrived from New Mexico and Arizona. The people of Allentown contributed food, used clothing, sending the goods here in two tractor-trailers and a 2½-ton truck.

A fire company in New Jersey collected food and clothing and brought it here by truck. On seeing the great need for help, the men stayed to help pump out buildings.

The Towanda airport was under deep water from the first and the Middle School athletic field was used as a landing place.

One helicopter landing there brought a full load of deodorizing and cleaning equipment donated by the Lehigh County commissioners.

About a dozen homes in the Monroeton-Powell area were either washed away or so badly damaged they cannot be repaired. Scores of cottages along the river and larger creeks floated away after being crushed.

One of the big losses was the building of Towanda Rod and Gun Club at Homets Ferry, eight miles south of Towanda.

After the waters receded, only a refrigerator and food freezer were on the site where the large clubhouse stood. The clubhouse, built about five years ago to replace one which burned, was a favorite spot

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The Bradford Scene . . .

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for wedding receptions and social gatherings.

For the first time ever river water went into the basement of the Bradford County Court house where there are numerous offfices. Damage there was comparatively light, however.

It was on Tuesday, June 20 that Perry received from Dick Gerstell, state CD director, an alert that serious flooding was possible. He started the chain of warning throughout the county.

The water rose only slowly the first day despite the heavy rain from Hurricane Agnes, and people began to believe nothing would happen here. Then Wednesday things happened with a rush.

All the creeks in the area spilled out of their banks, ripping and tearing everything in the way. Serious damage in the Powell and Monroeton communities had been done before the river began to overflow.

Towanda Creek, broader than the river at that time, cut a new channel which put most of those communities under 10 to 12 feet of water.

Included were scores of new homes along Canton Ave. The large Shaffer feed mill was left a shambles.

All sorts of boats were pressed into service to remove people from their homes in Monroeton, Powell and the Flats in South Towanda. Two elderly people had to be evacuated from an apartment on State St. in the heart of Towanda.

Mrs. Rita MacDonald, county Red Cross director, directed crews providing temporary lodging and giving food to refugees.

Towanda police under Chief Fred Scott and Sgt. Sol Spitulnik went on 24-hour vigilance, and all extra officers were called.

Firemen for a time put all pumpers on Main St. along with all sump pumps available but found their task impossible and finally gave up. Then they started pumping out private homes.

The first great flood of which there is any record occurred in Bradford County in 1692. It was 39 years later before another came.

On Dec. 13-14, 1901 the river rose to a depth of 21 feet, and there was considerable damage in South Towanda and the Monroeton area. That flood took four lives.

The next big flood came in March 1936, but there was no loss of life.

This Was the 4th Flood in 100 Years

The flood of June 23, 1972 was the fourth major flood recorded in the area's history in less than 100 years.

Until then, Chemung County residents were still talking about the flood of 1946.

It was on May 28, 1946, following five days of almost incessant rain that measured 4.95 inches that the Chemung River went on its record rampage.

It crested at 20.7 feet above normal, U.S. Engineers' figures, leaving behind it the greatest devastation the city had known.

The water went into sections that had never before been flooded, causing residential, commercial and industrial damage that soared into the countless millions.

The water flowed three feet over the level of Water St., causing damage that was estimated at a half a million dollars to the downtown stores.

The Red Cross, which organized the aid, reported that approximately 5,000 families had suffered losses — an estimated 12,000 persons — 3,000 families received aid.

One Elmiran, a 3-year-old Southside girl, was drowned. At Gang Mills, near Corning, a mother and two of her children lost their lives and in Tioga County, Pa., five persons died from the flood.

The 1946 flood was the first one since the flood of July 7-8, 1935.

The flood of 1935 covered a wide area bounded roughly by Hornell, Binghamton, Trumansburg and Wellsboro.

The flood waters took a toll of 43 lives and $44 million.

The Finger Lakes area, particularly Watkins Glen, suffered heavy damage.

Until then, the flood that oldtimers were talking about occurred on June 1, 1889. They recalled boats rowing into the lobby of the former Rathbun House in Elmira.

The Chemung and Cowanesque Valleys were hard hit at the same time that the Conemaugh River devastated Johnstown, Pa., killing 2,200 persons.

Thirteen lives were lost in the Southern Tier. Chemung County suffered no loss of life but over a half million dollars in damage was left by the high water.

Dust fills the Elmira air

The Star-Gazette Never Missed a Day

Water ripped up concrete

The Chemung River may have inundated the press at The Star-Gazette building on Baldwin St. in the center of Elmira, but it didn't keep the newspaper from publishing.

The water began rising after the Friday morning run had ended, and the editions had left the plant.

By the time the river crested, water had covered the press and huge rolls of newsprint stored in the basement and had risen almost two feet on the first floor.

There was no power or any other utilities. For all intents and purposes, the building at E. Market and Baldwin Sts. in downtown Elmira was dead.

But The Star-Gazette published its afternoon editions from the Ithaca Journal plant. It followed with an eight-page edition Saturday morning, a 16-page Telegram edition Sunday—including the comics and Family Weekly inserts—and a 16-page edition Monday.

Flood pictures and stories occupied two pages Friday afternoon, four pages Saturday morning, 14 pages Sunday and 12 pages Monday.

The story began about 3:30 a.m. Friday when it appeared that the river might overflow the dike. At that time, Star-Gazette personnel began to implement a pre-arranged plan.

Elmira Schools Supt. Paul Zaccarine, awakened at his home in Pine City, did not hesitate to make facilities available at the school district administration building adjoining Elmira Free Academy on high-and-dry Hoffman St.

Word went out on radio for Star-Gazette people to gather there.

Meanwhile, Publisher Robert Collson made arrangements in Ithaca for publication at The Star-Gazette's sister paper, The Journal.

While the news personnel began regrouping Friday morning, a team of advertising men waded into the Baldwin St. building. They collected as much material as they could find.

Page negatives from Friday morning's editions were collected. With two pages of flood pictures and stories substituted, the Friday edition rolled out of Ithaca with a full 24 pages of news and advertising.

By that time, a team of editors had driven to Ithaca and was supervising and laying out The Star-Gazette editions.

Thus, the newsroom was in Elmira and the editing and photo desks were in Ithaca—connected by a shuttle service of drivers.

At Friday noon, a telephone call was made from Ithaca to request help from the Gannett Co. for both the newspaper and for Twin Tier residents.

Within six hours, $100,000 was pledged from Frank E. Gannett Foundation for the Lend-A-Hand organization to be established.

By Saturday, virtually all news personnel had reported in and were working. Even the Southside residents—some who had lost most of their possessions—were out gathering news, taking pictures or handling copy.

One editor, who had been working at the Pine City evacuation center, ferried medical supplies across the Main St. bridge to the Southside in The Star-Gazette's mini-bus.

Communications was the basic problem. Telephones were out in Elmira, and that included the school administration building. But reporters drove to their destinations, got their stories and drove back several times a day.

Photographers—and reporters with cameras—flew over the stricken area several times on Army and Navy planes as space became available.

Hundreds of pictures were taken, and page after page of them was published.

Inspection of The Star-Gazette building indicated that the press would not be in operation quickly. Power was off. No teletype service was available, of course.

Experts on mechanical needs were in Elmira from Gannett Corporate staff in Rochester Friday and Saturday. They toured the plant and promptly rounded up equipment not available in Elmira to start the job of restoring press capacity and other services.

Mop-up operations began in the building Saturday and continued through the weekend.

The fleet of circulation trucks, which had been moved to higher ground early Friday morning, was dispatched to all accessible areas in the Twin Tiers.

Some reporters carried newspapers to evacuation centers, where accurate information was needed.

"That was our basic aim," said Publisher Collson, "to provide accurate and reliable information. All other considerations were secondary."

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ONE WAY
STOP